SERMONS

PREACH'D

Upon ſeveral Occaſions.

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The Firſt Volume.

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To the Worſhipful the Maſters of the Bench, *and the reſt of the* Members *of the* Honourable Society *of* Lincolns-Inn.

Gentlemen,

WHen I had reſolv'd to publiſh theſe Sermons, there could be no diſpute to whom I ought to dedicate them; For they do of right belong to you, being, moſt of them, firſt preach'd among you; but eſpecially upon the account of my great obligations to you for the conſtant reſpect you have been

pleas'd to expreſs towards me, both in the favourable acceptance and generous encouragement of my labours among you, ever ſince I had the honour and happineſs to be related to you. In a grateful acknowledgment whereof, I humbly preſent this ſmall part of them to you, and ſhall ever endeavour to approve my ſelf

Your moſt obliged and faithful Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

THE

The Preface.

I *Shall neither trouble the* Reader, *nor my ſelf, with any apology for the publiſhing of theſe* Sermons. *For if they be in any meaſure truly ſerviceable to the end for which they are deſign'd,* viz. *to eſtabliſh men in the principles of Religion, and to recommend to them the practice of it with any conſiderable advantage, I do not ſee what apology is neceſſary; and if they be not, I am ſure none can be ſufficient. However, if there need any, the common heads of excuſe in theſe caſes are very well known; and I hope I have an equal right to them with other men.*

I ſhall chuſe rather in this Preface, *to give a ſhort account of the following* Diſcourſes; *and, as briefly as I can, to vindicate a ſingle* paſſage *in the* firſt *of them, from the Exceptions of a* Gentleman, *who hath been pleas'd to honour it ſo far, as to write a whole Book againſt it.*

The Deſign of theſe Diſcourſes *is fourfold.*

Firſt,

First, *To ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of* Atheiſm, *and of* ſcoffing at Religion; *which I am ſorry is ſo neceſſary to be done in this Age. This I have endeavour'd in the* two firſt *of theſe* Diſcourſes.

Secondly, *To recommend Religion to men, from the great and manifold* advantages *which it brings both to* publick Society, *and to* particular perſons. *And this is the argument of the* third *and* fourth.

Thirdly, *To repreſent the* excellency, *more particularly, of the* Chriſtian Religion; *and* to vindicate the practice of it, *from the ſuſpition of thoſe* grievous troubles and difficulties, *which many imagine it to be attended withall. And this is the ſubject of the* fifth *and* ſixth.

Fourthly, *To perſwade men to the practice of this holy Religion, from the* great obligation which the profeſſion of Chriſtianity *lays upon men to that purpoſe; and more particularly, from the glorious rewards of another life; which is the deſign of the* two laſt Diſcourſes.

Having given this ſhort account of the following Diſcourſes, *I crave leave of the* Reader *to detain him a little longer, whilſt I vindicate a* paſſage *in the firſt of theſe* Sermons, *from the aſſaults of a whole* Book

purpoſely

purposely writ against it. The Title *of the* Book is Faith vindicated from the a possibility of Falshood. *The Author Mr.* J. S. *the famous* Author *of* Sure-footing. *He hath indeed in this last book of his, to my great amazement, quitted that* glorious Title. *Not that I dare assume to my self to have put him out of conceit with it, by having convinc'd him of the phantasticalness of it. No, I despair to convince that man of any thing, who after so fair an admonition does still persist to maintain,** *that* first and self-evident Principles *not only may, but are fit to be demonstrated; and** *that those ridiculous identical Propositions, that* Faith is Faith, *and* a Rule is a Rule, *are* First Principles *in this Controversie of* the Rule of Faith, *without which nothing* can be solidly concluded either about Rule or Faith. *But there was another reason for his quitting of that* Title, *and a prudent one indeed: He had forsaken the defence of* Sure-footing, *and then it became convenient to lay aside that* Title, *for fear of putting people any more in mind of that Book.*

* *Letter of Thanks,* p. 14. &c.

* Ibid. p. 11.

I expected indeed after his Letter of thanks, *in which he* * *tells us, he* intended to throw aside the rubbish of my Book, that in his answer he might the better lay open the Fabrick of my Discourse, and have

* P. 14.

have nothing there to do, but to ſpeak to ſolid Points: *I ſay, after this, I expected a full Anſwer to* the ſolid Points *(as he is pleaſed to call them) of my Book; and that, (according to his excellent method of* removing the rubbiſh, *in order to the pulling down of a building,) the* Fabrick *of my Book would long ſince have been demoliſh'd, and laid even with the ground. But eſpecially, when in the concluſion of that moſt civil and obliging* Letter, *he threaten'd* never to leave following on his blow, till he had either brought Dr. *Still*, and me to lay Principles that would bear the teſt, or it was made evident to all the world that we had none, *I began (as I had reaſon) to be in a terrible fear of him, and to look upon my ſelf as a dead man. And indeed who can think his ſelf ſo conſiderable, as not to dread this mighty man of* Demonſtration, *this Prince of* Controvertiſts, *this great Lord and Poſſeſſour of* Firſt Principles? *But I perceive that great Minds are merciful, and do ſometimes content themſelves to threaten when they could deſtroy.*

For inſtead of returning a full Anſwer to my Book, he (according to their new. Mode *of confuting Books) manfully falls a nibbling at one ſingle* paſſage *in it,* pag. 118. *wherein he makes me to ſay (for I ſay*

no

no such thing) *that* the Rule of Christian Faith, and consequently Faith it self, is possible to be false: *Nay, in his* Letter of Thanks *, *he says* it to be avow'd Position, *in that place*, that Faith is possible to be false. *And to give the more countenance to this calumny, he chargeth the same* Position (in equivalent termes) of the possible falshood of Faith, and that as to the chiefest and most fundamental Point, the Tenet of a Deity, *upon the fore-mention'd* Sermon. *But because he knew in his conscience, that I had* avow'd *no such* Position, *he durst not cite the words either of my* Book *or* Sermon, *lest the Reader should have discover'd the notorious falshood and groundlesness of this Calumny: Nay he durst not so much as refer to any particular place in my Sermon, where such a* passage *might be found. And yet this is the Man that has the face to charge others with false citations; to which charge, before I have done, I shall say something, which (what effect soever it may have upon him) would make any other man sufficiently asham'd.*

* P. 13.

But yet I must acknowledg, that in this Position *which he fastens upon me, he honours me with excellent company, my Lord* Faukland, Mr. Chillingworth, and *Dr.* Stillingfleet; *Persons of that admirable strength and clearness in their* Writings, *that*

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that Mr. S. when he reflects upon his own ſtyle and way of reaſoning, may bluſh to acknowledg that ever he has read them. And as to this Poſition *which he charges them withall, I do not know (nor have the leaſt reaſon upon Mr. S's word to believe) any ſuch thing is maintain'd by them.*

As for my ſelf, whom I am now only concern'd to vindicate, I ſhall ſet down the two Paſſages *to which I ſuppoſe he refers.*

In my Sermon, *I endeavour (among other things) to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of* Atheiſm *upon this account*: Becauſe it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. *To make this good, I diſcourſe thus: Ariſtotle* hath long ſince obſerved, how unreaſonable it is to expect the ſame kind of Proof for every thing, which we have for ſome things. Mathematical things being of an abſtracted nature, are only capable of clear Demonſtration. But Concluſions in Natural Philoſophy, are to be prov'd by a ſufficient Induction of experiments; things of a Moral nature, by moral arguments; and matters of Fact by credible Teſtimony. And though none of theſe be ſtrict Demonſtration, yet have we an undoubted aſſurance of them, when they are prov'd by the beſt arguments that the nature and

quality

quality of the thing will bear. None can demonſtrate to me, that there is ſuch an Iſland in *America* as *Jamaica*; yet, upon the Teſtimony of credible perſons, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as from doubting of the cleareſt Mathematical Demoſtration. So that this is to be entertained as a firm Principle, by all thoſe who pretend to be certain of any thing at all, that when any thing is prov'd by as good arguments as that thing is capable of, and we have as great aſſurance that it is, as we could poſſibly have ſuppoſing it were, we ought not in reaſon to make any doubt of the exiſtence of that thing. Now to apply this to the preſent caſe. The being of God is not Mathematically demonſtrable, nor can it be expected it ſhould; becauſe only Mathematical matter admits of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be prov'd immediately by ſenſe, becauſe God being ſuppos'd to be a pure Spirit, cannot be the object of any corporeal ſenſe. But yet we have as great aſſurance that there is a God, as the nature of the thing to be prov'd is capable of, and as we could in reaſon expect to have, ſuppoſing that he were.

Upon this paſſage it muſt be (*if any in the* Sermon) *that Mr.* S. *chargeth this* Poſition

ſition (in equivalent terms) of the poſſible falſhood of Faith, and that as to the chiefeſt and moſt fundamental Point, the Tenet of a Deity. *And now I appeal to the Reader's eyes and judgment, whether the ſum of what I have ſaid, be not this, That though the exiſtence of God be not capable of that ſtrict kind of Demonſtration which Mathematical matters are, yet that we have an undoubted aſſurance of it. One would think that no man could be ſo ridiculous as from hence to infer, that I believe it poſſible, notwithſtanding this aſſurance, that there ſhould be no God. For however in many other caſes an undoubted aſſurance that a thing is, may not exclude all ſuſpition of a poſſibility of its being otherwiſe, yet in this* Tenet of a Deity *it moſt certainly does. Becauſe whoever is aſſur'd that there is a God, is aſſur'd that there is a Being that is immutable, and which by any other thing cannot be deſtroy'd. So that my Diſcourſe is ſo far from being* equivalent *to the* Poſition *he mentions, that it is a perfect contradiction to it. And he might with as much truth have affirm'd, that I had expreſly, and in ſo many words ſaid that there is no God.*

The other paſſage is in pag. 118. *of my* Book, *concerning* the Rule of Faith. *I was diſcourſing that no man* can ſhew by any

any neceſſary argument, that it is naturally impoſſible that all the Relations concerning *America* ſhould be falſe. *But* yet (*ſay I*) I ſuppoſe, that notwithſtanding this, no man in his wits is now poſſeſs'd with ſo incredible a folly, as to doubt whether there be ſuch a place. The caſe is the very ſame as to the certainty of an ancient Book, and of the ſenſe of plain expreſſions: We have no Demonſtration for theſe things, and we expect none; becauſe we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any Book is ſo ancient as it pretends to be; or that it was written by him whoſe Name it bears; or that this is the ſenſe of ſuch and ſuch paſſages in it; it is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe: But we are very well aſſur'd that it is not, nor hath any prudent man any juſt cauſe to make the leaſt doubt of it; For a bare poſſibility that a thing may be, or not be; is no juſt cauſe of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is poſſible all the People in *France* may dye this night; but I hope the poſſibility of this doth not incline any man in the leaſt to think it will be ſo. It is poſſible that the Sun may not riſe to morrow morning; yet for all this I ſuppoſe that no man hath the leaſt doubt but that it will.

To avoid the cavils of this impertinent

man, I have transcrib'd the whole Page *to which he refers. And now, where is this* avow'd Position of the possible falshood of Faith? *All that I say is this, That we are not* infallible *either in judging of the antiquity of a Book, or of the sense of it; by which I mean (as any man of sense & ingenuity would easily perceive I do) that we cannot demonstrate these things so, as to shew that the contrary necessarily involves a contradiction; but yet that we may have a firm assurance concerning these matters, so as not to make the least doubt of them.*

And is this to avow the possible falsehood of Faith? *And yet this* Position Mr. S. *charges upon these words; how justly I shall now examine.*

Either by Faith Mr. S. *means the* Doctrine *reveal'd by God, and then the meaning of the* Position *must be,* that what God says is possible to be false; *which is so absurd a* Position *as can hardly enter into any mans mind; and yet Mr. S. hath the modesty all along in his* Book *to insinuate, that in the forecited* Passage *I say as much as this comes to.*

Or else Mr. S. *means by* Faith, *the* assent *which we give to Doctrines as reveal'd by God; and then his sense of Infallibility must be, either that whoever assents to any thing as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd, upon supposition that it is so reveal'd; or else absolutely, that whoever assents to any thing as re-*

reveal'd by God, cannot be deceived, Now although I do not, in the paſſage *fore-cited, ſpeak one ſyllable concerning Doctrines reveal'd by God, yet I affirm (and ſo will any man elſe) that an aſſent to any Doctrine as reveal'd by God, if it be reveal'd by him, is impoſſible to be falſe, But this is only an infallibility* upon ſuppoſition, *which amounts to no more than this,* That if a thing be true, it is impoſſible to be falſe. *And yet the principal deſign of Mr.* S's Book *is to prove this; which I believe no man in the world was ever ſo ſenſleſs as to deny. But if he mean* abſolutely, *that whoever aſſents to any Doctrine as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceived, that is, that no man can be miſtaken about matters of faith (as he muſt mean, if he pretend to have any adverſary, and do not fight only with his own ſhadow), this I confeſs is a very comfortable Aſſertion; but I am much afraid it is not true.*

Or elſe laſtly, By Faith *he underſtands the* Means *and* Motives *of Faith. And then the plain ſtate of the Controverſie between us is this,* Whether it be neceſſary to a Chriſtian belief to be infallibly ſecur'd of the Means whereby the Chriſtian Doctrine is convey'd to us, and of the firmneſs of the Motives upon which our belief of it is grounded. *This indeed is ſomething to the purpoſe; for though in the* paſſage *before-cited, I ſay not one word concerning the* Motives

of our belief of the Christian Doctrine, yet my Discourse there was intended to be apply'd to the means *whereby the knowledg of this Doctrine is convey'd to us. However I am contented to joyn issue with Mr. S. upon both these Points.*

1. *That it is not necessary to the true nature of* Faith, *that the* Motives *upon which any man believes the Christian Doctrine should be absolutely conclusive, and impossible to be false. That it is necessary,* Mr. S. *several times affirms in his* Book; *But how unreasonably, appears from certain & daily experience. Very many Christians (such as St.* Austin *speaks of,* as sav'd not by the quickness of their understandings, but the simplicity of their belief) *do believe the Christian Doctrine upon incompetent grounds, and their belief is true, though the argument upon which they ground it be not* (as Mr. S. *says*) absolutely conclusive of the thing: *And he that thus believes the Christian Doctrine, if he adhere to it, and live accordingly, shall undoubtedly be sav'd; and yet I hope,* Mr. S. *will not say that any man shall be saved without true Faith. I might add, that in this* Assertion Mr. S. *is plainly contradicted by some of his own Church.* The Guide
P. 35. of Controversies * *expresly says*, that it is not necessary that a Divine Faith should always have an external rationally infallible ground or motive thereto (whether Church Autho-

Authority, or any other) on his part, that ſo believes. *Here is a man of their own Church* avowing *this* Poſition, that Faith is poſſible to be falſe. *I deſire* Mr. S. *who is the very* Rule *of Controverſie, to do juſtice upon this falſe* Guide.

I muſt acknowledg that Mr. S. *attempts to prove this* Aſſertion, *and that by a very pleaſant & ſurprizing Argument, which is this.* The profound Myſteries of Faith (*he tells us* *) muſt needs ſeem to ſome, (*viz.* thoſe who have no light but their pure natural Reaſon, * *as he ſaid before*) impoſſible to be true; which therefore nothing but a Motive of its own nature ſeemingly impoſſible to be falſe, can conquer ſo as to make them conceit them really true. *What Mr. S. here means by a Motive* of its own nature ſeemingly *impoſſible to be falſe, I cannot divine; unleſs he means a* real ſeeming *impoſſibility. But be that as it will; does Mr. S. in good earneſt believe that a* Motive of its own nature ſeeming impoſſible to be falſe, *is ſufficient to convince any man, that has & uſes* the light of natural Reaſon, *of the truth of a thing*, which muſt needs ſeem to him impoſſible to be true? *In my opinion, theſe two ſeeming impoſſibilities are ſo equally matched that it muſt needs be a drawn Battel between them. Suppoſe the thing to be believed be* Tranſubſtantiation; *this indeed is a very*

* *Faith vind.* p. 90.

* p. 89.

profound Myſtery, and is (to ſpeak in M. S's Phraſe) of its own nature ſo ſeemingly impoſſible. That I know no argument in the World ſtrong enough to cope with it. And I challenge Mr. S. to inſtance in any Motive of Faith, which is, both to our underſtanding and our ſenſes, more plainly impoſſible to be falſe, than their Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation is evidently impoſſible to be true. And if he cannot, how can he reaſonably expect that any man in the World ſhould believe it?

2. That it is not neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, that we ſhould be infallibly ſecur'd of the means whereby the Chriſtian Doctrine is convey'd to us. Particularly of the Antiquity & Authority of the Books of Scripture, and that the expreſſions in it cannot poſſibly bear any other ſenſe. And theſe are the very things I inſtance in, in the paſſage ſo often mention'd. And to theſe Mr. S. ought to have ſpoken, if he intended to have confuted that paſſage. But he was reſolv'd not to ſpeak diſtinctly, knowing his beſt play to be in the dark, and that all his ſafety lay in the confuſion and obſcurity of his talk.

Now, that to have an infallible ſecurity in theſe particulars, is not neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, is evident upon theſe two accounts; becauſe Faith may be without this infallible ſecurity, and becauſe in the particulars mention'd it is impoſſible to be had.

1. Be-

1. *Because Faith may be without this infallible security. He that is so assur'd of the Antiquity and Authority of the Books of Scripture, and of the sense of those Texts wherein the Doctrines of Christianity are plainly delivered, as to see no just cause to doubt thereof, may really assent to those Doctrines, though he have no infallible security. And an assent so grounded, I affirm to have the true nature of Faith. For what degree of* assent, *& what security of the* Means, *which convey to us the knowledg of Christianity, are necessary to the true nature of Faith, is to be estimated from the end of Faith, which is the salvation of mens souls. And whoever is so assur'd of the* authority *and* sense *of Scripture, as to believe the Doctrine of it, and to live accordingly, shall be sav'd. And surely such a belief as will save a man hath the true nature of Faith, though it be not infallible. And if God have sufficiently provided for the salvation of men of all capacities, it is no such reflection upon* the goodness and wisdom of Providence, *as Mr. S. imagines, that he hath not taken care that every mans faith should arrive to the degree of infallibility; nor does our blessed Saviour, for not having made this provision, deserve* to be esteem'd by all the world not a wise Lawgiver, but a meer Ignoramus and Impostor, *as* * *one of his* fellow-Controvertists *speaks with reverence.*

* *Labyrinthus Cantuariensis*, p. 77.

Beſides, this Aſſertion that infallibility is neceſſary to the true nature of that aſſent which we call Faith, *is plainly falſe upon another account alſo; becauſe Faith Admits of degrees, but infallibility has none. The Scripture ſpeaks of a weak & a ſtrong Faith, & of the increaſe of Faith, but I never heard of a weak and a ſtrong Infallibility. Infallibility is the higheſt perfection of the knowing faculty, and conſequently the firmeſt degree of aſſent upon the firmeſt grounds, and which are known to be ſo. But will* Mr. S. *ſay, that the higheſt degree of aſſent admits of degrees, and is capable of increaſe? Infallibility is an abſolute impoſſibility of being deceived; now I deſire Mr. S. to ſhew me the degrees of abſolute impoſſibilities.*

2. *Becauſe an infallible ſecurity in the particulars mention'd is impoſſible to be had; I mean in an ordinary way, & without miracle & particular revelation; becauſe the nature of the things is incapable of it. The utmoſt ſecurity we have of the antiquity of any Book is humane Teſtimony, and all humane Teſtimony is fallible, for this plain reaſon, becauſe all men are fallible. And though Mr. S. in defence of his beloved Tradition, is pleas'd to ſay, that humane Teſtimony in ſome caſes is infallible, yet I think no man before him was ever ſo hardy as to maintain that the Teſtimony of fallible men is infallible, I grant it to*

be

be in many cases certain; that is such as a considerate man may prudently rely & proceed upon, and hath no just cause to doubt of; and such as none but an obstinate man or a fool can deny. And that thus the learned men of his own Church define certainly *Mr.* S. (*if he would but vouchsafe to read such Books*) *might have learnt from* Melchior Canus *, *who speaking of the firmness of humane Testimony in some cases* (*which yet he did not believe to be infallible*) *defines it thus,* Those things are certain among men, which cannot be deny'd without obstinacy and folly. *I know Mr.* S. *is pleas'd to say, that* certainty *and* infallibility *are all one. And he is the first man that I know of, that ever said it. And yet perhaps, some body may have been before him in it; for I remember* Tully *says,* that there is nothing so foolish but some Philosopher or other has said it. *I am sure Mr.* S's *own* Philosopher *Mr.* Wh. *contradicts him in this most clearly, in his* Preface *to* Rushworth's Dialogues; *where explicating the* term Moral certainty, *he tells us, that* some understood by it such a certainty as makes the cause always work the same effect, though it take not away the absolute possibility of working otherways; *and this, presently after, he tells us,* ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, & the Authors consider'd as mistaken in under-

* De loc. Theol. lib. 11. c. 4. Certa apud homines ea sunt, quæ negare sine pervicaciâ & stultitiâ non possunt.

undervaluing it. *So that, according to Mr.* White, *true certainty may consist with a possibility of the contrary, and consequently Mr.* S. *is mistaken in thinking certainty and infallibility to be all one. Nay, I do not find any two of them agreeing among themselves, about the notions of infallibility and certainty.* Mr. Wh. *says, that that which some call* moral certainty, *is true certainty, though it do not take away a possibility of the contrary. Mr.* S. *asserts the direct contrary, that* Moral *certainty is only probability, because it does not take away the possibility of the contrary. The* Guide in Controversies * *differs from them both, and makes* morally certain *and* infallible *all one. I desire that they would agree these matters among themselves, before they quarrel with us about them.*

* P. 135.

In brief then, though moral certainty *be sometimes taken for a high degree of probability which can only produce a doubtful assent; yet it is also frequently us'd for a firm and undoubted assent to a thing upon such grounds as are fit fully to satisfie a prudent man; and in this sense I have always us'd this* Term. *But now* infallibility *is an absolute security of the understanding from all possibility of mistake in what it believes. And there are but two ways for the understanding to be thus secur'd; either*

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by the perfection of its own nature, or by ſupernatural aſſiſtance. But no humane underſtanding being abſolutely ſecur'd from poſſibility of miſtake, by the perfection of its own nature (which I think all mankind, except Mr. S. *have hitherto granted) it follows, that no man can be infallible in any thing, but by ſupernatural aſſiſtance. Nor did ever the Church of* Rome *pretend to infallibility upon any other account, as every one knows that hath been converſant in the Writings of their Learned men. And Mr.* Creſſy *in his * Anſwer to Dr.* Pierce, *hath not the face to contend for any other infallibility but this, that* the immutable God can actually preſerve a mutable creature from actual mutation: *But I can by no means agree with him in what immediately follows, concerning the* Omniſcience *of a Creature; that* God, who is abſolutely omniſcient, can teach a rational Creature all truths neceſſary or expedient to be known; ſo that though a man may have much ignorance, yet he may be in a ſort omniſcient within a determinate ſphere. Omniſcience within a determinate ſphere, *is an infinite within a finite ſphere; and is not that a very pretty ſort of knowing all things, which may conſiſt with an ignorance of many things? Of all the* Controvertiſts *I have met with* (except

* P. 88, 89.

cept Mr. S.) *Mr.* Creſſy *is the happieſt at theſe ſmart and ingenious kind of reaſonings.*

As to the other Particular *of the ſenſe of Books, it is likewiſe plainly impoſſible, that any thing ſhould be deliver'd in ſuch clear and certain words as are abſolutely incapable of any other ſenſe; and yet notwithſtanding this, the meaning of them may be ſo plain, as that any unprejudic'd and reaſonable man may certainly underſtand them. How many* Definitions *and* Axiomes, &c. *are there in* Euclid, *in the ſenſe of which men are univerſally agreed, and think themſelves undoubtedly certain of it? and yet the words in which they are expreſs'd, may poſſibly bear another ſenſe. The ſame may be ſaid, concerning the Doctrines and Precepts of the H. Scriptures; and one great reaſon why men do not ſo generally agree in the ſenſe of theſe as of the other, is becauſe the intereſts, and luſts, and paſſions of men are more concern'd in the one than the other. But whatever uncertainty there may be in the ſenſe of any Texts of Scripture, Oral Tradition is ſo far from affording us any help in this caſe, that it is a thouſand times more uncertain, and leſs to be truſted to; eſpecially if we may take that to be the Traditionary ſenſe of Texts of Scripture, which we meet with in the*

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Decretals *of their* Popes, *and the* Acts *of ſome of their* Councils, *than which never was any thing in the whole world more abſurd and ridiculous: And whence may we expect to have the infallible Traditional ſenſe of Scripture, if not from the* Heads *and* Repreſentatives *of their Church?*

This may abundantly ſuffice for the vindication of that Paſſage *which Mr. S. makes ſuch a rude clamour about, as if I had therein deny'd the truth and certainty of all Religion; but durſt never truſt the Reader with a view of thoſe* words *of mine upon which he pretended to ground this calumny. But the world underſtands well enough, that all this was but a ſhift of Mr. S's for the ſatisfaction of his own Party, and a pitiful art to avoid the vindication of* Sure footing, *a task he had no mind to undertake.*

And yet the main deſign of this Book *which he calls* Faith vindicated, *&c. is to prove that which I do not believe any man living ever deny'd,* viz. *That what is true is not poſſible to be falſe: Which, though it be one of the plaineſt Truths in the world, yet he proves it ſo fooliſhly, as would make any man (if it were not evident of it ſelf) to doubt of it. He proves it from* Logick, *and* Nature, *and* Metaphyſicks, *and* Ethicks, *&c. I wonder he did*

did not do it likewiſe from Arithmetick *and* Geometry, the Principles *whereof,* he * *tells us,* are concern'd in demonſtrating the certainty of Oral Tradition. *He might alſo have proceeded to* Aſtrology, *and* Palmiſtry, *and* Chymiſtry, *and have ſhewn how each of theſe lend their aſſiſtance to the evidencing of this Truth. For* that *could not have been more ridiculous, than his* * *argument from the nature of* Subject *and* Prædicate *and* Copula in Faith-Propoſitions; *becauſe forſooth whoever affirms any Propoſition of Faith to be true, affirms it impoſſible to be falſe. Very true. But would any man argue, that what is true, is impoſſible to be falſe, from the* nature *of* Subject, Prædicate *and* Copula? *For be the Propoſition true or falſe, theſe are of the ſame* nature *in both, that is, they are* Subject, Prædicate, *and* Copula.

* *Surefooting,* p. 93.

* *Faith vindic,* p. 6. 7. &c.

But that the Reader *may have a taſte of his clear ſtyle and way of reaſoning, I ſhall for* his *ſatisfaction tranſcribe Mr. S's whole Argument from the* nature *of the* Prædicate. *His words are theſe.* Our Argument from the *Copula* is particularly ſtrengthen'd from the nature of the *Prædicate* in the Propoſitions we ſpeak of; I mean in ſuch ſpeeches as affirm ſuch and ſuch Points of Faith to be true. For *True* means *Exiſtent* in Propoſitions which expreſs only the

P. 9, 10. 11, 12.

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An eſt of a thing, as moſt Points of Faith do; which ſpeak abſtractedly, and tell not wherein the nature of the ſubject it ſpeaks of conſiſts, or the *Quid eſt*. So that moſt of the Propoſitions Chriſtians are bound to profeſs are fully expreſt thus, *A Trinity is exiſtent*, &c. and the like may be ſaid of thoſe Points which belong to a Thing or Action paſt; as, *Creation was*, &c. For, *Exiſtent* is the Prædicate in theſe two, only affixt to another difference of time; and 'tis equally impoſſible ſuch Subjects ſhould *neither have been* nor *not have been*, *or have been* and *have not been* at once, as it is that a thing ſhould neither *be* nor *not be* at preſent, or both *be* and *not be* at preſent. Regarding then ſtedfaſtly the nature of our Prædicate [*Exiſtent*] we ſhall find that it expreſſes the utmoſt Actuality of a Thing; and as taken in the poſture it bears in thoſe Propoſitions, that Actuality *exercis'd*, that is, the utmoſt Actuality in its moſt actual ſtate; that is, as abſolutely excluding all manner or leaſt degree of Potentiality, and conſequently all Poſſibility of being otherwiſe; which is radically deſtroy'd when all Potentiality is taken away. This Diſcourſe holding which in right to truth I ſhall not fear to affirm (unconcern'd in the drollery of any Oppoſer) to be more than

than Mathematically *demonſtrative*, it follows inevitably, that whoſo is bound to profeſs a *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, &c. *is or was Exiſtent*, is alſo bound to profeſs that 'tis *impoſſible they ſhould be not-Exiſtent*; or which is all one, that 'tis impoſſible theſe points of Faith ſhould be falſe.

The ſame appears out of the nature of *diſtinction* or *diviſion* apply'd to our Prædicate *Exiſtent*, as found in theſe Propoſitions: For could that Prædicate bear a pertinent diſtinction, expreſſing this and the other reſpect, or *thus* and *thus*, it might poſſibly *be* according to one of theſe reſpects, or thus *conſider'd*, and *not be* according to another, that is *another way conſider'd*: But this evaſion is here impoſſible; for either thoſe diſtinguiſhing Notions muſt be more Potential or antecedent to the Notion of *Exiſtent*, and then they neither reach *Exiſtent*, nor ſupervene to it as its Determinations or Actuations, which Differences ought to do; nor can any Notion be more *Actual* or *Determinative* in the line of *Subſtance* or *Being*, than *Exiſtent* is; and, ſo, fit to diſtinguiſh it in that line; nor, laſtly, can any determination in the line of Accidents ſerve the turn; for, thoſe ſuppoſe Exiſtence already put, and ſo the whole Truth of the Propoſition entire and compleat anteceedently

dently to them: 'Tis impoſſible therefore that what is thus affirm'd to be *True*, ſhould in *any regard* be affirmed *poſſible to be falſe*; the impoſſibility of diſtinguiſhing the Prædicate pertinently, excluding here all poſſibility of divers reſpects.

The ſame is demonſtrated from the impoſſibility of diſtinguiſhing the Subjects of thoſe Faith-Propoſitions; for thoſe Subjects being Propoſitions themſelves, and accepted for *Truths*, as is ſuppos'd, they are incapable of Diſtinction, as ſhall be particularly ſhewn hereafter. Beſides, thoſe ſubjects being Points of Faith, and ſo ſtanding in the Abſtract, that is, not deſcending to ſubſuming reſpects, even in that regard too they are freed from all pertinent diſtinguiſhableneſs.

The ſame is demonſtrated from the nature of *Truth*, which conſiſts in an Indiviſible; whence there is nothing of *Truth* had, how great ſoever the conceived approaches towards it may be, till all *may-not-bees*, or Potentiality to be otherwiſe, be utterly excluded by the Actuality of *Is* or Exiſtence; which put or diſcover'd, the light of *Truth* breaks forth, and the dim twilights of *may-not-bees* vaniſh and diſappear.

I have here (Reader) *preſented thee with a Diſcourſe which (if we may believe*

Mr. S.) is more than Mathematically demonſtrative. *A rare ſight indeed! And is not this a pleaſant Man, and of good aſſurance? I now find it true, which he* * *ſays elſewhere*, that Principles are of an inflexible *genius*, and ſelf-confident too, and that they love naturally to expreſs themſelves with an aſſuredneſs. *But certainly the ſacred* Names *of* Principles *and* Demonſtration *were never ſo profan'd by any man before. Might not any one write a Book of ſuch* Jargon, *& call it Demonſtration? And would it not equally ſerve to prove or confute any thing? If he intended this* ſtuff *for the ſatisfaction of the People, he might as well have writ in the* Coptick *or* Sclavonian *Language: yet I cannot deny, but that it is very ſutable to the Principles of the* Roman Church; *for why ſhould not their* Science *as well as their* Service *be in an unknown Tongue? that the one may be as fit to improve their knowledg, as the other is to excite their devotion. But if he deſign'd this for the Learned, nothing could be more improper; for they are far leſs apt to admire* non-ſenſe *than the common people: And I deſire that no man (how learned ſoever he may think himſelf) would be over-confident, that this is ſenſe. I do verily believe, that neither* Harphius, *nor* Rusbrochius, *nor the profound* Mother Juliana, *have any thing in their Writings*

tings more senseless and obscure than this discourse of his, which he affirms to be more than Mathematically Demonstrative. *So that if I were worthy to advise Mr.* S. *he should give over this pretence to* Science; *for whatever he may think, his Talent certainly does not lie that way; but he seems to be as well made for a* Mystical Divine, *as any man I know. And methinks his* Superiours *should be sensible of this, and employ him to write about* the Deiform fund of the Soul, *the* supersessential life, *the* method of self-annihilation, *and* the passive unions of nothing with nothing: *These are profound* Subjects, *and he hath a* Style *peculiarly fitted for them. For even in this* parcel of stuff *which I have now cited, there are five or six* words (*such as* potentiality, actuality, actuation, determinative, supervene, and subsume) *which (if they were but well mingled and discreetly order'd, and brought in now and then with a* that is, *to explain one another) would half set up a man in that way, and enable him to write as Mystical a Discourse as a man would wish. But enough of this. And I have trespass'd not a little upon mine own disposition in saying thus much, though out of a just indignation at confident Non-sense.*

It is time now to draw toward a conclusion of this debate. I shall only leave with the

Reader *a few Observations concerning this* Book *of Mr.* S's, *and his Doctrine of Infallibility.*

First, *That the main drift of his* Book *being to prove, that what is true is impossible to be false, he opposes no body that I know of, in this matter.*

Secondly, *That in affering infallibility to be necessary to the true nature of Faith, he hath the generality of his own Church his professed Adversaries. The Church of* Rome *never arrogated to her self any other Infallibility, but what she pretends to be founded upon* Christs *Promise to secure his Church always from Error by a* supernatural assistance; *which is widely different from Mr.* S's *rational Infallibility of* Oral Tradition. *Mr.* S, *surely cannot be ignorant, that the* Divines *of their Church* (*till Mr.* Rushworth *and Mr.* White *found out this new way*) *did generally resolve Faith into the infallible Testimony of the Church, and the infallibility of their Church into our Saviours Promise; & the evidence of the true Church into the* Marks of the Church, *or* the Motives of credibility; *which* Motives *are acknowledg'd to be only* prudential, *and not* demonstrative.* Bellarmine *says, that the* Marks *of the Church do not make it* evidently true, *which is the true Church, but only* evidently credible; and that (*says he*) is said to be evidently

* L. 4. de Eccles.

dently credible, which is neither ſeen in it ſelf, nor in its Principles; but yet hath ſo many and ſo weighty Teſtimonies, that every wiſe man hath reaſon to believe it. *Becanus* * *to the ſame purpoſe*, that the Motives of credibility are only the foundation of a prudent, but not of an infallible aſſent. *I know very well, that Mr.* Knott, *and ſome others, would fain perſwade us, that an aſſent* in ſome ſort *infallible, may be built upon* prudential Motives, *which is as abſurd as is poſſible; but if it were true, yet Mr.* S. *would not accept of this ſort of infallibility; nothing leſs will ſerve him than* demonſtrative Motives, *and ſuch as are* abſolutely concluſive of the thing. Stapleton (*as Mr.* Creſſy *tells us*) *expreſly ſays, that ſuch* an infallible certitude of Means *is not now neceſſary to the* Paſtors *of the Church, as was neceſſary to the* Apoſtles, *who were the firſt Founders of the Church. So that according to theſe* Authors, *there may be true faith, where neither the Means nor the Motives of it are ſuch as to raiſe our aſſent to the degree of infallibility. And this is as much to the full as any* Proteſtant (*that I know of*) *ever ſaid. Nay, even his* Friends *of the* Tradition, *Mr.* Ruſhworth, *Mr.* White, *and Mr.* Creſſy, *are guilty of the ſame* damnable and fundamental error, *as Mr.* S. *calls it* *. *For they grant, leſs aſſurance than that which is infallible*

* Sum. Tom. 2. partit. de fide c. 1.

* *Letter to his Anſwerer*, p. 5.

lible to be ſufficient to Chriſtian Faith; and that we are juſtly condemn'd if we refuſe to believe upon ſuch evidence as does ordinarily ſatisfie prudent men in humane affairs. And particularly, Mr. Wh. *makes a queſtion, whether humane nature be capable of infallibility; As I have ſhewn at large by clear and full Teſtimonies out of each of theſe*

P. 120. &c Authors, *in the* Anſwer *to* Sure-footing[x]. *Of which* Teſtimonies *though Mr.* S. *hath not thought fit to take the leaſt notice throughout his* Book; *yet I cannot but think it a reaſonable requeſt, to deſire him to vindicate the* Divines *of his own Church (eſpecially thoſe of his own way) from theſe things, before he charge us any further with them.*

Thirdly, *That Mr.* S. *by this* Principle, *that infallibility is neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, makes every true believer infallible in matters of Faith; which is ſuch a* Paradox, *as I doubt whether ever it enter'd into any other man's mind. But if it be true, what need then of any infallibility in* Pope or *Council? And if this infallibility be grounded upon the nature of Oral Tradition, what need of ſupernatural aſſiſtance? I doubt Mr.* S. *would be loth to preach this Doctrine at* Rome, *I have often heard, that there is an old teaſty* Gentleman *lives there, who would take it very ill that any one beſide himſelf ſhould pretend to be infallible.*

Fourthly,

Fourthly, *That Mr.* S. *by* his *Principles does plainly exclude from ſalvation the generality of his own Church, that is, all that do not believe upon* his *Grounds. And this is the neceſſary conſequence of his reaſoning in a late* Treatiſe, *entituled,* The method to arrive at ſatisfaction in Religion: *The principles whereof are theſe*; *That* the Church is a Congregation of Faithfull; *The* Faithfull *are thoſe* who have true Faith; *That,* till it be known which is the true Faith, it cannot be known which is the true Church; *That,* which is the true Faith, can only be known by the true Rule of Faith, *which is* Oral Tradition; *And that the infallibility of* this Rule *is* evident to common ſenſe. *And from theſe Principles he concludes* *, *that* thoſe who follow not this Rule, and ſo are out of this Church, can have no true Faith; *And that* though many of the Points to which they aſſent are true, yet their aſſent is not Faith; for Faith (ſpeaking of Chriſtian Faith) is an aſſent which cannot poſſibly be falſe. *So that the foundation of this Method is the ſelf-evident infallibility of Oral Tradition, which hath been ſufficiently conſider'd in the* Anſwer to Sure-footing, *which yet remains unanſwer'd. That which I am now concern'd to take notice of, is the conſeqence of this* Method, *which does, at one blow, excom-*

Sec. 21.

municate and un-Christian the far greatest part of his own Church. For if all who do not follow Oral Tradition *as their only Rule of Faith, are out of the Church, and can have no true Faith, then all who follow the* Council of Trent *are* ipso facto *no Christians. For nothing is plainer, than that* that Council *did not make Oral Tradition the sole Rule of their Faith, nor rely upon it as such; which hath been prov'd at large in the* Answer *to* Sure-footing.

But why is Mr. S. *so zealous in this matter of Infallibility? There is a plain reason for it. He finds that confidence, how weakly soever it be grounded, hath some effect upon the common and ignorant People; who are apt to think there is something more than ordinary in a swaggering man, that talks of nothing but* Principles *and* Demonstration. *And so we see it in some other Professions. There are a sort of People very well known, who find that the most effectual way to cheat the People is always to pretend to* infallible *Cures.*

I have now done with his Infallibility. But I must not forget his Letter of Thanks. *I shall wholly pass by the passion and ill language of it, which a man may plainly see to have proceeded from a gall'd and uneasie mind. He would fain put on some pleasantness, but was not able to conceal his vexation,*

tion: Nor ſhall I inſiſt upon his palpable ſhuffling about the explication of the Terms, Rule *and* Faith. *He was convinc'd that he had explain'd them very untowardly, and therefore would gladly come off by ſaying* P. 7. *that he did not intend* explication, *but only to* prædicate *or* affirm *ſomething of them. And yet the whole deſign of the firſt page of* Sure-footing *is to ſhew the neceſſity of beginning with the* meaning of thoſe words which expreſs the thing under debate: *And this* method *he tells us he will* apply to his preſent purpoſe, *and will* examine well *what is* meant *by thoſe* words *which expreſs the thing he was to diſcuſs, namely, The* RULE *of* FAITH. *Now if to* examine well what is meant by words, *be not to go about to* explain *them, I muſt confeſs my ſelf to be in a great error. Of the ſame kind is his Apology for his* Teſtimonies, *as if they were* * not intended againſt * P. 105. the Proteſtants, *whereas his* Book *was writ againſt the* Proteſtants; *and when he comes to his* Teſtimonies, *he* * *declares the deſign of them to be, to* ſecond by Authority * *Sure-footing*, p. 126. *what he had before eſtabliſh'd by* Reaſon. *So that if the* Rational part *of his* Book *was intended againſt the Proteſtants, and the* Teſtimonies *were deſign'd to ſecond it, I cannot underſtand why he ſhould ſay* one *was leſs intended againſt them than the* other. *But*

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it ſeems he is ſo conſcious of the weakneſs of thoſe Teſtimonies, that he does not think them fit to ſatisfie any but thoſe who believe him already.

As to his charge of falſe citations, *it is but the common artifice of the Roman Controvertiſts when they have nothing elſe to ſay. However, that the world may ſee how little he is to be truſted, I ſhall inſtance in two or three, about which he makes the loudeſt clamour, and leave it to the* Reader *to judg by theſe, of his ſincerity in the reſt.*

He ſays, I notoriouſly abuſe the Preface *to* Ruſhworth's Dialogues, *in citing the* Author *of it to ſay, that* ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe always to work the ſame effect, though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working otherwiſe, ought abſolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty; *whereas* (*ſays Mr.* S.) *he only tells us there* p. 7. that by moral certainty [ſome underſtood] ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe, &c. *To vindicate my ſelf in this I ſhall only ſet the* Authors *words before the* Readers *eyes. They are theſe;* This term *Moral certainty*, every one explicateth not alike; but ſome underſtood by it ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe always work the ſame effect, though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working otherways. Others call'd that a *moral certainty*

which

which proceeds from, &c. A third explication of this word is, &c. Of these three, the first ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, and the Authors consider'd as mistaken in undervaluing it. *Is this only to tell us that by moral certainty* some understood, &c.? *Does not the* Preiacer *also expressly affirm, that what those* some *understood* by *moral certainty* ought absolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty? *which is the very thing I cited him for.*

Another heavy charge is, that according to my usual sincerity, I quote Rushworth's *Nephew to say, that a few good words are to be cast in concerning Scripture, [for the satisfaction of indifferent men who have been brought up in this verbal and apparent respect of the Scripture], whereas (says Mr.* S.) *in the place you cite, he only expresses, it would be* a satisfaction to indifferent men to see the positions one would induce them to embrace maintainable by Scripture. *Doth he only say so? let the Reader judg. The words in Mr.* Rushworth *are these;* yet this I must tell ye, that it were a great satisfaction for indifferent men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent respect of the Scripture, to see that the Positions you would induce them unto, can be & are maintain'd by Scripture, & that they are grounded,

grounded therein. *Certainly one would think, that either this man has no eyes, or no forehead.*

But the greateſt outcry of all, is, that I a-
p. 76. 77. *buſe his firſt* Demonſtration *by virtue of a direct falſification both of his words and ſenſe, by cogging in the word* [all], *making his principle run thus, that* the greateſt hopes and fears are applied to the minds of [all] Chriſtians. *This indeed I make to be his* Principle, *grounded upon his words which I had cited alittle before; and they are theſe,* Firſt, That Chriſtian Doctrine was at firſt unanimouſly ſetled by the Apoſtles in the hearts of the faithful diſpers'd in great multitudes over ſeveral parts of the world, *2ly,* That this Doctrine was firmly believed by [all] thoſe faithful to be the way to Heaven, and the contradicting or deſerting of it to be the way to damnation, ſo that the greateſt hopes and fears imaginable were, by engaging the divine Authority, ſtrongly appli'd to the minds of the firſt Believers. *&c. Now if theſe* firſt believers, *to whom he ſays,* theſe hopes and fears were ſtrongly apply'd *be* all thoſe faithful *he ſpoke of before which were* diſpers'd over ſeveral parts of the world, (*as the tenor of his words plainly ſhews*) *what are theſe leſs than* all *the Chriſtians of that Age? and he himſelf a little after, tells us there is the*

ſame

ſame reaſon of the following Ages. So that I made his Principle run no otherwiſe *than he himſelf had laid it. And if it contradict what he ſays elſewhere, it is no new or ſtrange thing. I wonder more at his confidence in charging ſuch* falſifications *upon me as every mans eyes will preſently confute him in. Methinks though a man had all* Science *and all Principles, yet it might not be amiſs to have ſome Conſcience.*

I ſhall only ſpeak a few words to the two ſolid Points, *(as I may call them) of his* Letter, *and I have done.*

I had charg'd him that he makes Traditions certainty, a firſt *and* ſelf-evident Principle; *& yet that he goes about to demonſtrate it, which I ſaid was impoſſible to be done, and if it could be done was needleſs. To avoid this inconvenience, which he found himſelf ſorely preſs'd withall, he diſtinguiſhes between* Speculative *and* Practical *ſelf-evidence; and ſays, that things which are* practically *ſelf-evident may be demonſtrated, but thoſe that are* ſpeculatively *ſo, cannot. But he muſt not think to ſhelter himſelf from ſo palpable an abſurdity by this impertinent diſtinction. For let things be* evident *how they will,* ſpeculatively *or* practically; *'tis plain, that if they be Principles* evident of themſelves, *they need nothing to evidence them; and if they be* firſt *Principles, there*

can

can be nothing to make them more evident, becauſe there is nothing before them, to demonſtrate them by. Now if Mr. S. did in truth believe, that the certainty of Tradition was a firſt *and* ſelf-evident Principle, *he ſhould by all means have let it alone, for it was in a very good condition to ſhift for it ſelf; but his blind way of Demonſtration is enough to caſt a miſt about the cleareſt truth in the world. But perhaps by the* ſelf-evident *certainty of Tradition,* Mr. S. *only means that it is evident to* himſelf, *for I dare ſay it is ſo to no body elſe. And if that be his meaning, he did well enough to endeavour to demonſtrate it; it was no more than needed.*

The other Point is about his Firſt Principles, *ſuch as theſe,* a Rule is a Rule, Faith is Faith, *&c. which he ſays** muſt principle all that can be ſolidly concluded either about *Rule* or *Faith. Of theſe he hath mighty ſtore, and bleſſeth himſelf much in them, and out of his good nature pities my caſe, who did* undertake to write a Diſcourſe about the Ground of Faith, without ſo much as one Principle to bleſs my ſelf with. *But the miſchief is, that after all this ſtir about them, they are good for nothing, & of the very ſame ſtamp with that frivolous one* Ariſtotle *ſpeaks of* [if a thing be, it is], *which he rejects as a vain and ridiculous Propoſition. Such are* Mr. S.'s *firſt Principles, by ten thouſand*

* P. 11.

P. 74.

* *Analytic. poſter.* L. 1.

ſand whereof a man ſhall not be able to advance one ſtep in knowledg, becauſe they produce no Concluſion but themſelves; whereas it is of the nature of Principles to yeild a Concluſion different from themſelves. And to convince Mr. S. *fully of the foolery of theſe Principles, I will try what can be done with them, either in a* Categorical *or* Hypothetical *Syllogiſm: e.g.* A Rule is a Rule, Tradition is a Rule, *Ergo* Tradition is a Rule. *Again,* If a Rule be a Rule, then a Rule is a Rule; But a Rule is a Rule, *Ergo. How is any man the wiſer for all this? But it may be* Mr. S. *can make better work with them, and manage them more dextrouſly, ſo as to* principle *any thing that can* be ſolidly concluded *in any Controverſie.*

And now I hope at laſt to have given Mr. S. *full ſatisfaction; for he has brought me to the very point he deſir'd,* viz. *to acknowledg* that I have no Principles. *For if there be no other but ſuch as theſe, I do declare to all the world, that I neither have any* Principles, *nor will have any.*

JOB xxviii. 28.

And unto man he ſaid; Behold, the fear of the Lord that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.

IN this Chapter *Job* diſcourſeth of the Secrets of Nature, and the unſearchable perfections of the Works of *God*. And the reſult of his diſcourſe is this, That a perfect knowledg of Nature is no where to be found but in the Author of it; no leſs wiſdom and underſtanding than that which made the World, and contrived this vaſt and regular frame of Nature, can throughly underſtand the Philoſophy of it, and give a perfect account of all its operations: But yet there is a *knowledg* which is very pro-

per to man, and lyes level to humane understanding; and that is, the *knowledg* of our Creator and of the duty we owe to him, the *wisdom* of pleasing God, by doing what he commands, and avoiding what he forbids: This *Knowledg* and *Wisdom* may be attained by Man, and is sufficient to make him happy. *And unto Man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

These words consist of two Propositions, which are not distinct in sense, but one and the same thing variously express'd; For *wisdom* and *understanding* are *synonymous* words here; and though sometimes they have different notions, yet in the *Poetical Books of Scripture* they are most frequently used as words equivalent, and do both of them indifferently signifie either a *speculative knowledg* of things, or a *practical skil* about them, according to the exigency of the matter or thing spoken of. And so likewise *the fear of the Lord*, and *departure from evil*, are *phrases* of a very near sense, and like importance; and therefore we find them several times put together in Scripture: *Fear the Lord*, and *depart from evil*: *By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* So that they differ only as *cause* and *effect*, which by a *Metonymy* usual in all sorts of Authors, are frequently put one for another.

Prov. 3.7. Prov. 16.6

Now,

Now, *To fear the Lord*, and *to depart from evil*, are phraſes which the Scripture uſeth in a very great latitude, to expreſs to us *the ſumm of Religion, and the whole of our duty*. And becauſe the large uſage of theſe phraſes is to be the foundation of my following diſcourſe, I ſhall for the further clearing of this matter endeavour to ſhew theſe two things:

1. That 'tis very uſual in the language of Scripture, to expreſs the *whole of Religion* by theſe and ſuch like phraſes.

2. The particular fitneſs of theſe two phraſes to deſcribe Religion by.

I. It is very uſual in the language of Scripture to expreſs the *whole of Religion* by ſome eminent principle or part of Religion.

The great principles of Religion are *knowledg, faith, remembrance, love & fear*; by all which, the Scripture uſeth to expreſs the *whole duty* of man.

In the *Old Teſtament*, by the *knowledg, remembrance* and *fear* of God. Religion is called *The knowledg of the holy*. And wicked men are deſcribed to be ſuch as *know not God*. So likewiſe, by the *fear of the Lord*, frequently in this Book of *Job*, and in the *Pſalms* and *Proverbs*. And Mal. 3. 16. *Then they that feared the Lord, ſpake often one to another*. And the *fear of God* is ex-

Prov. 30. 3

Jer. 10. 25

preſly ſaid to be the ſum of Religion, *Fear*
Eccl. 12. 13. *God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole of man*: And on the contrary, the wicked are deſcribed to be ſuch as
Pſal. 36. 1. *have not the fear of God before their eyes.* And ſo likewiſe by the *remembrance* of
Eccl. 12. 1 *God, Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth*; that is, enter upon a religious courſe betimes: And on the contrary, the character of the wicked is, that *they forget God*; *The wicked ſhall be turned into hell,*
Pſal. 9. 17. *and all the Nations that forget God.*

In the *New Teſtament*, *Religion* is uſually expreſſed by *faith* in *God* and *Chriſt*, and the *love* of them. Hence it is, that true Chriſtians are ſo frequently called *believers*, and wicked and ungodly men *unbelievers*: And that good men are deſcribed
Rom. 8. 28 to be ſuch as *love God*, *All things ſhall work*
Eph. 6. 24. *together for good to them that love God*; and ſuch *as love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*. Now the reaſon why theſe are put for the *whole of Religion*, is, becauſe the *belief*, and *knowledg*, and *remembrance*, and *love*, and *fear* of God, are ſuch powerful principles and have ſo great an influence upon men to make them Religious, that where any one of theſe really is, all the reſt, together with the true and genuine effects of them, are ſuppoſed to be.

And ſo likewiſe tho ſum of all Religion is often

often expreſſed by ſome *eminent part* of it; which will explain the ſecond phraſe here in the Text, *departing from evil*. The *worſhip of God* is an *eminent part* of *Religion*; and *prayer* which is often in Scripture expreſſed by *ſeeking God*, and *calling upon his name*, is a chief part of Religious worſhip. Hence Religion is deſcribed by *ſeeking God*, *He is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*: and by *calling upon his name*, *Whoſoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, ſhall be ſaved*. And ſo by *coming to God*, and by *departing from evil*. In this fallen ſtate of man, Religion begins with *repentance* and *converſion*, the two oppoſite terms of which, are *God* and *Sin*: Hence it is that Religion is deſcribed ſometimes by *coming to God*, *He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is*; that is, no man can be religious, unleſs he believe there is a God; ſometimes by *departing from ſin*, *And he that departeth from evil, maketh himſelf a prey*: that is, ſuch was the bad ſtate of thoſe times of which the Prophet there complains, that no man could be religious, but he was in danger of being perſecuted.

Heb. 11. 6.

Acts 2. 21.

Heb. 11. 6.

Iſa. 59. 15.

II. For the fitneſs of theſe two phraſes to deſcribe Religion by.

1. For the firſt, [*the fear of the Lord*] The fitneſs of this phraſe will appear, if we conſider how great an influence the

fear of God hath upon men to make them religious. Fear is a paſſion that is moſt deeply rooted in our natures, and flows immediately from that Principle of ſelf-preſervation which God hath planted in every man. Every one deſires his own preſervation and happineſs, and therefore hath a natural dread and horrour of every thing that can deſtroy his Being, or endanger his happineſs. And the greateſt *danger* is from the greateſt *power*, and that is *omnipotency*, So that *the fear of God* is an inward acknowledgment of a holy and juſt Being, which is armed with an almighty and irreſiſtible power; God having hid in every mans conſcience a ſecret awe and dread of his infinite power, and eternal juſtice. Now *fear* being ſo intimate to our natures, it is the ſtrongeſt bond of laws, and the great ſecurity of our duty.

There are two bridles or reſtraints which God hath put upon humane nature, *ſhame* and *fear*. *Shame* is the weaker, and hath place only in thoſe in whom there are ſome remainders of virtue. *Fear* is the ſtronger, and works upon all who love themſelves, and deſire their own preſervation. Therefore in this degenerate ſtate of mankind, *fear* is that paſſion which hath the greateſt power over us, and

by

by which God and his laws take the ſureſt hold of us: Our *deſire* and *love*, and *hope*, are not ſo apt to be wrought upon by the repreſentation of virtue, and the promiſes of reward and happineſs, as our *fear* is from the apprehenſions of Divine diſpleaſure; For though we have loſt, in a great meaſure, the guſt and reliſh of true happineſs, yet we ſtill retain a quick ſenſe of pain and miſery. So that *fear* relies upon a natural love of our ſelves, and is complicated with a neceſſary deſire of our own preſervation. And therefore Religion uſually makes its firſt entrance into us by this paſſion; hence perhaps it is, that *Solomon* more than once calls *the fear of the Lord the beginning of wiſdom.*

2. As for the ſecond phraſe [*departing from evil*] the fitneſs of it to expreſs the *whole duty of man*, will appear, if we conſider the neceſſary connexion that is between the negative and poſitive part of our duty. He that is careful to avoid all ſin, will ſincerely endeavour to perform his duty. For the ſoul of man is an active principle, and will be employed one way or other; it will be doing ſomething; if a man abſtain from evil, he will do good. Now there being ſuch a ſtrait connexion between theſe, *the whole of our duty* may be expreſſed by either of them; but moſt

fitly by *departing from evil*, becauſe that is the firſt part of our duty. Religion begins in the forſaking of ſin:

Virtus eſt vitium fugere, & ſapientia prima Stultitia caruiſſe-----

Virtue begins in the forſaking of vice, and the firſt part of wiſdom is not to be a fool.

And therefore the *Scripture*, which mentions theſe parts of our duty, doth conſtantly put *departing from evil* firſt; *Depart from evil, and do good. Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.* We are firſt to *put off the old man which is corrupt according to deceitful luſts*, and then to *be renewed in the ſpirit of our minds, and to put on the new man.* &c. *Let him eſchew evil and do good.* To all which I may add this further conſideration, that the Law of God, contained in the ten commandments, conſiſting moſtly of prohibitions, (*Thou ſhalt not* do ſuch or ſuch a thing) our obſervance of it is moſt fitly expreſſed by *departing from evil*, which yet includes obedience likewiſe to the poſitive Precepts implied in thoſe prohibitions.

Pſal 34. 14 & 37. 27. Iſa. 1. 16, 17. & 55. 7 Eph. 4. 23, 24. 1 Pet. 3. 11

Having thus explain'd the *Words*, I come now to conſider the *Propoſition* contain'd in them, which is this:

That

That *Religion is the beſt knowledg and wiſdom.*

This I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe three ways.

1. *By a direct proof of it.*

2. *By ſhewing on the contrary the folly and ignorance of irreligion and wickedneſs.*

3. *By vindicating Religion from thoſe common imputations which ſeem to charge it with ignorance, or imprudence.*

I begin with the direct proof of this: And becauſe Religion comprehends two things, the *knowledg* of the *Principles* of it, and *a ſuitable life and practice*; (the firſt of which being *ſpeculative*, may more properly be called *knowledg*; and the latter, becauſe 'tis *practical*, may be called *wiſdom* or *prudence*) therefore I ſhall endeavour diſtinctly to prove theſe two things.

1. *That Religion is the beſt knowledg.*

2. *That it is the trueſt wiſdom.*

1. Firſt, *That it is the beſt knowledg.* The knowledg of Religion commends its ſelf to us upon theſe two accounts,

1. 'Tis the knowledg of thoſe things which are in themſelves moſt excellent.

2. Of

2. Of thoſe things which are moſt uſeful and neceſſary for us to know.

Firſt, It is the beſt knowledg, becauſe it is the knowledg of thoſe things which are in themſelves moſt *excellent*, and *deſirable to be known*; and thoſe are *God*, and our *duty*. *God* is the ſum and comprehenſion of all perfection. It is delightful to know the *Creatures*, becauſe there are particular excellencies ſcatter'd and diſpers'd among them, which are ſome ſhadows of the Divine Perfections. But in *God*, all perfections in their higheſt degree and exaltation meet together and are united. How much more delightful then muſt it needs be, to fix our minds upon ſuch an object in which their is nothing but *beauty* and *brightneſs*, what is *amiable* and what is *excellent*; what will *raviſh our affections, and raiſe our wonder, pleaſe* us and *aſtoniſh* us at once? And that the finite meaſure and capacity of our underſtandings is not able to take in and comprehend the infinite perfections of God, this indeed ſhews the excellency of the object, but doth not altogether take away the delightfulneſs of the knowledg. For as it is pleaſant to the eye to have an endleſs proſpect, ſo is it ſome pleaſure to a finite underſtanding to view unlimited excellencies, which have no ſhore nor bounds, though it cannot comprehend

prehend them. There is a pleaſure in admiration, and this is that which properly cauſeth admiration, when we diſcover a great deal in an object which we underſtand to be excellent, and yet we ſee we know not how much more beyond that, which our underſtandings cannot fully reach and comprehend.

And as the *knowledg of God* in his *nature* and *perfections*, is excellent and deſirable; ſo likewiſe to know him in thoſe glorious manifeſtations of himſelf *in the works of Creation and Providence*; and above all, in that ſtupendious work of the *Remption* of the world by *Jeſus Chriſt*, which was ſuch a myſtery, and ſo exeellent a piece of knowledg, that *the Angels* are ſaid to *deſire to pry into it*. 1 Pet. 1. 12

And as the *knowledg of God* is excellent, ſo likewiſe *of our Duty*; which is nothing elſe but *virtue*, and *goodneſs*, and *holineſs*, which are the image of God, a conformity to the nature and will of God, and an imitation of the Divine Excellencies and Perfections, ſo far as we are capable: For to know our duty, is to know what it is to be like God in *goodneſs*, and *pity*, and *patience, and clemency*, in *pardoning injuries*, and *paſſing by provocations*, in *juſtice and righteouſneſs*, in *truth* and *faithfulneſs*, and in a hatred and deteſtation of

of the contrary of theſe. In a word, it is to know what is the good and acceptable will of God, what it is that he loves and delights in, and is pleaſed withall, and would have us to do in order to our perfection and our happineſs. It is deſervedly accounted a piece of excellent knowledg, to know the *laws of the Land*, and the *cuſtoms of the Country* we live in, and the *will of the Prince* we live under: How much more, to know the *Statutes of Heaven*, and the *Laws of eternity*, thoſe immutable and eternal rules of juſtice and righteouſneſs; to know the will and pleaſure of the great Monarch, and univerſal King of the World, and the *Cuſtoms* of that *Country* where we muſt live for ever? This made *David* to admire the Law of God at that ſtrange rate, and to advance the knowledg of it above all other knowledg, *I have ſeen an end of all perfection,* Pſal. 119. 96. *but thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

Secondly, 'Tis the *knowledg* of thoſe things which are moſt *uſeful* and *neceſſary* for us to know. The *goodneſs* of every thing is meaſured by its *end*, and *uſe*, and that's the beſt thing which ſerves the beſt end and purpoſe; and the more neceſſary any thing is to ſuch an end, the better it is: So that the beſt knowledg is that which is of greateſt uſe and neceſſity to us in order to

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our *great end*, which is *eternal happineſs*, and the *ſalvation of our Souls*. Curious ſpeculations, and the contemplation of things that are impertinent to us and do not concern us, nor ſerve to promote our happineſs, are but a more ſpecious and ingenious ſort of idleneſs, a more pardonable and creditable kind of Ignorance. That Man that doth not know thoſe things which are of uſe and neceſſity for him to know, is but an ignorant man, whatever he may know beſides. Now the knowledg of *God*, and of *Chriſt*, and of our *duty*, is of the greateſt uſefulneſs and neceſſity to us, in order to our happineſs. It's of abſolute neceſſity that we ſhould know *God* and *Chriſt*, in order to our being happy; *This is life eternal* (that is, the only way to it) *to know thee the only true God, and him whom thou haſt ſent, Jeſus Chriſt*. It is neceſſary alſo, in order to our happineſs, to know our *duty*; becauſe 'tis neceſſary for us to do it, and it is impoſſible to do it except we know it. Joh. 17. 3.

So that whatever other knowledg a man may be endued withall, he is but an ignorant perſon who doth not know God, the author of his being, the preſerver and protector of his life, his Soveraign, and his Judg, the giver of every good and perfect gift, his ſureſt refuge in trouble, his beſt

beſt friend or worſt enemy, the preſent ſupport of his life, his hopes in death, his future happineſs, and his portion for ever: who does not know his relation to God, the duty that he owes him, and the way to pleaſe *him* who can make him happy or miſerable for ever: who doth not know the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

If a man by a vaſt and imperious mind, and *a heart large as the ſand upon the Sea-ſhore*, (as it is ſaid of *Solomon*) could command all the knowledg of *Nature* and *Art*, of *words* and *things*; could attain to a maſtery in all Languages, and ſound the depths of all Arts and Sciences, meaſure the earth and the heavens, and tell the ſtarrs, and give an account of their order and motions; could diſcourſe of the intereſts of all States, the intrigues of all Courts, the reaſon of all Civil laws and conſtitutions, and give an account of the Hiſtory of all ages; could ſpeak of trees, *from the Cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the Hyſop that ſprings out of the wall; and of beaſts alſo, and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fiſhes*: and yet ſhould, in the mean time, be deſtitute of the knowledg of *God*, and *Chriſt*, and his *duty*; all this would be but an impertinent vanity, and a more glittering kind

of

of ignorance; and ſuch a man (like the Philoſopher, who whilſt he was gazing upon the ſtars fell into the ditch) would but *ſapienter deſcendere in infernum*, be undone with all this knowledg, and with a great deal of wiſdom go down to Hell.

2. Secondly, *That to be Religious is the trueſt wiſdom*; and that likewiſe upon two accounts.

1. Becauſe it is to be wiſe for our ſelves.

2. It is to be wiſe as to our main intereſt and concernment.

1. *'Tis to be wiſe for our ſelves.* There's an expreſſion, Job 22. 21. *He that is wiſe is profitable to himſelf*; and *Prov.* 9. 12. *If thou be wiſe, thou ſhalt be wiſe for thy ſelf*: intimating that wiſdom regards a mans own intereſt and advantage, and he is not a wiſe man that doth not take care of himſelf and his own concernments; according to that of old *Ennius*, *nequicquam ſapere ſapientem, qui ſibi ipſi prodeſſe non quiret*; That man hath but an empty title of Wiſdom, and is not really wiſe, who is not wiſe for himſelf. As *ſelf-preſervation* is the firſt principle of *Nature*, ſo care of our ſelves and our own intereſt is the firſt part of *wiſdom*. He that is wiſe in the affairs and concernments of other men, but careleſs and negligent of his own, that

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man may be ſaid to be buſie, but he is not wiſe; he is employed indeed, but not ſo as a wiſe man ſhould be: Now this is the *wiſdom of Religion*, that it directs a man to a care of his own proper intereſt and concernment.

2. *It is to be wiſe as to our main intereſt.* Our chief end and higheſt intereſt is happineſs: And this is *happineſs*, to be freed from all (if it may be) however from the greateſt evils; and to enjoy (if it may be) all good; however the chiefeſt. *To be happy*, is not only to be freed from the *pains* and *diſeaſes* of the *body*, but from *anxiety* and *vexation* of *ſpirit*; not only to enjoy the *pleaſures* of *ſenſe*, but *peace* of *conſcience* and tranquility of *mind*. *To be happy*, is not only to be ſo for a little while, but as long as may be, and if it be poſſible, for ever. Now *Religion* deſigns our *greateſt and longeſt happineſs*; it aims at a freedom from the greateſt evils, and to bring us to the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of the greateſt good. For Religion wiſely conſiders, that men have *immortal ſpirits*; which as they are *ſpirits*, are capable of a pleaſure and happineſs diſtinct from that of our *bodies* and our *ſenſes*; and becauſe they are *immortal*, are capable of an everlaſting happineſs. Now our *ſouls* being the beſt part of our ſelves, and *eternity* being infi-

infinitely the moſt conſiderable duration; the greateſt *wiſdom* is to ſecure the intereſt of our *ſouls*, and of *eternity*, though it be with the loſs, and to the prejudice of our *temporal* and *inferior* Intereſts. Therefore *Religion* directs us rather to ſecure *inward peace*, than *outward eaſe*; to be more careful to avoid *everlaſting* and *intolerable torments*, than *ſhort* and *light afflictions which are but for a moment*; to court *the favour* of *God* more than the *friendſhip* of the *World*; and not ſo much *to fear them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, as him who after he hath kill'd can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell.* In a word, our *main intereſt* is to be *as happy as we can*, and *as long as is poſſible*; and if we be caſt into ſuch circumſtances, that we muſt be either in part and for a time, or elſe wholly and always miſerable, the *beſt wiſdom* is to chuſe the *greateſt* and moſt *laſting happineſs*, but the *leaſt* and *ſhorteſt miſery*. Upon this account *Religion* preferrs thoſe *pleaſures which flow from the preſence of God for evermore*, infinitely before the *tranſitory pleaſures* of this world; and is much more careful to avoid *eternal miſery*, than *preſent ſufferings*. This is the *wiſdom of Religion*, that upon conſideration of the whole, and caſting up all

things together, *it does adviſe and lead us to our beſt intereſt.*

II. The *Second* way of *confirmation* ſhall be by endeavouring to ſhew the ignorance and folly of irreligion. Now all that are irreligious, are ſo upon one of theſe two accounts: Either, *Firſt*, becauſe they do not believe the foundations and principles of Religion, as *the exiſtence of God, the immortality of the ſoul*, and *future rewards*: or elſe, *Secondly*, becauſe though they do in ſome ſort believe theſe things, yet they live contrary to this their belief; and of this kind are the far greateſt part of wicked men. The *firſt* ſort are guilty of that which we call *ſpeculative*, the *other* of *practical atheiſm*. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the Ignorance and Folly of both theſe.

Firſt, *Speculative atheiſm* is *unreaſonable*, and that upon theſe *Five* accounts. 1. Becauſe *it gives no tolerable account of the exiſtence of the world.* 2. Nor *does it give any reaſonable account of the univerſal conſent of mankind in this apprehenſion*, That there is a God. 3. *It requires more evidence for things than they are capable of.* 4. *The atheiſt pretends to know that which no man can know.* 5. *Atheiſm contradicts it ſelf.*

I. Becauſe *it gives no tolerable account of the exiſtence of the world.* One of the greateſt difficulties that lies in the atheiſt's way

way is, upon his own ſuppoſition *that there is no God*, to give a likely account of the exiſtence of the world. We ſee this vaſt frame of the World, & an innumerable multitude of creatures in it, all which we who believe a God attribute to *Him* as the author of them. For a *being* ſuppos'd of infinite *goodneſs*, and *wiſdom*, and *power*, is a very likely cauſe of theſe things. What more likely to make this vaſt world, to ſtretch forth the Heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and to form theſe and all things in them of nothing, than infinite *power*? What more likely to communicate being and ſo many degrees of happineſs to ſo many ſeveral ſorts of creatures, than infinite *goodneſs*? What more likely to contrive this admirable frame of the Univerſe, and all the creatures in it, each of them ſo perfect in their kind, and all of them ſo fitted to each other, and to the whole; than infinite *counſel* and *wiſdom*? This ſeems to be no unreaſonable account.

But let us ſee now what account the *atheiſt* gives of theſe things. If there be no God, there are but theſe *two* ways imaginable for the world to be. Either it muſt be ſaid, That not only the *Matter*, but alſo the *frame* of this world is eternal; and that, as to the main, things always were as they are, without any firſt cauſe of their

being; which is the way of the *Ariſtotelian* atheiſt; (thoſe I mean, who proceed upon *Ariſtotles* ſuppoſition of the eternity of the world, but yet deny it to be from God, which he expreſly aſſerts); Or elſe, the *matter* of the world being ſupppſed to be eternal and of it ſelf, the original of this vaſt and beautiful *frame* muſt be aſcribed meerly to *chance*, and the caſual concourſe of the parts of matter; which is the way of the *Epicurean* atheiſt. But neither of theſe ways gives a tolerable account of the exiſtence of the world.

1. I ſhall firſt conſider the *Hypotheſis* of thoſe whom for diſtinctions ſake I call the *Ariſtotelian* atheiſts, which is this, That not only the *matter*, but alſo the *frame* of the world is eternal; and that, as to the main, it was always as it is, of it ſelf; and that there hath been from all eternity a ſucceſſion of men and other creatures without any firſt cauſe of their being.

It ſeems to be very hard, and if that would do any good, might be juſt matter of complaint, that we are fallen into ſo prophane and ſceptical an age, which takes a pleaſure and a pride in unravelling almoſt all the received principles both of Religion and Reaſon: So that we are put many times to prove thoſe things, which can hardly be made plainer than they are of themſelves. And ſuch almoſt are theſe

Prin-

Principles, *That God is*, and, *That all things were made by him*; which by reaſon of the bold cavills of perverſe and unreaſonable men we are now a days put to defend.

That ſomething is of it ſelf, is evident, becauſe we ſee things are. And the things that we ſee muſt either have had ſome firſt cauſe of their being, or have been always and of themſelves. One of theſe two is unavoidable.

So that the controverſie between us and this ſort of atheiſts comes to this; Which is the more credible opinion, that the world was never made nor had a beginning, but always was as it is; and that there hath been from all eternity a ſucceſſion of men and other creatures, without any firſt cauſe of their being: or, that there was from all eternity ſuch a *being* as we conceive *God* to be, infinite in power, goodneſs, and wiſdom, which made us and all other things? The *firſt* of theſe opinions I ſhall ſhew to be altogether incredible, and the *latter* to have all the credibility and evidence of which a thing of that nature is capable.

Now in comparing the probabilities of things, that we may know on which ſide the advantage lies, theſe two conſiderations are of great moment, What the arguments are on each ſide, and what the

ficulties. For if there be fair proofs on the one ſide, and none at all on the other; and if the moſt preſſing difficulties be on that ſide on which there are no proofs: this is ſufficient to render *one* opinion very credible, and the *other* altogether incredible.

Theſe *two things* therefore I ſhall endeavour to make good, in the matter that is now under our conſideration. *Firſt*, That there are fair proofs on our ſide, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other. And *Secondly*, That that ſide on which there is no proof, is incumbred with the greateſt difficulties.

Firſt, That there are fair proofs on our ſide, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other.

This Queſtion, *Whether the World was created and had a beginning, or not?* is a queſtion concerning *an ancient matter of fact*, which can only be decided theſe two ways; by *teſtimony*, and by *probabilities of reaſon*. *Teſtimony*, is the principal argument, in a matter of this nature; and if fair *probabilities of reaſon* concurr with it, this argument hath all the ſtrength it can have. Now both theſe are clearly on the affirmative ſide of the queſtion, *viz.* That the

world

world was created, and had a beginning.

1. *Teſtimony*; of which there be two kinds, *Divine*, and *Humane*.

Divine teſtimony, as ſuch, is not proper to be us'd in this cauſe, conſidering the occaſion of the preſent debate: For that would be to beg the firſt and main queſtion now in controverſie, which is, Whether there be a God or not? which a teſtimony from God does ſuppoſe, and therefore ought not to be brought for the proof of it. 'Tis true indeed that thoſe effects of Divine Power, I mean miracles, which will prove a Divine teſtimony to an infidel, will as well prove the being of a God to an atheiſt: But when we diſpute againſt thoſe who deny a God, no teſtimony ought to be preſum'd to be from God, but muſt be prov'd to be ſo. And whatever argument proves that, will alſo prove that there is a God.

Humane teſtimonies are of two ſorts, *univerſal tradition*, and *written Hiſtory*. Both theſe are plainly and beyond diſpute on our ſide.

Firſt, There is an *univerſal tradition* concerning the beginning of the world, and that it was made by God. And for the evidence of this, we have the concurring Tradition of the moſt *ancient* Nati-

*Vid. Grot de. verit. Chr. Relig. L. 1.

ons, the *Egyptians* and *Phœnicians* *; and of the moſt *barbarous*, the *Indians*, who as *Starbo* * tells us, *did in many things agrree with the Græcians*, particularly in this, *That the World did begin, and ſhould have an end; and that God the maker and governour of it, is preſent in all parts of it.* And *Acoſta* tells us, that at the firſt diſcovery of *America*, the inhabitants of *Peru* did worſhip one chief God, under the name or title of *The maker of the Univerſe*: And yet theſe people had not had any commerce with the other known parts of the world, for God knows how many ages.

*Geograph. L. 15.

To which may be added, that the moſt ancient of the Philoſophers, and thoſe that were the heads of the chief Sects of Philoſophy, as *Thales*, *Anaxagoras*, and *Pythagoras*, theſe did likewiſe conſent to this Tradition. Particularly concerning *Thales*. *Tully* * tells us, that he was *the firſt* of all the Philoſophers *that enquired into theſe things, and he ſaid, that water was the beginning of all things, and that God was that mind* (or intelligent principle) *which faſhioned all things out of water.* So likewiſe *Strabo* * informs us, that the *Brachmans*, the chief Sect of Philoſophers among the *Indians*, agreed with the *Grecians* in this, *That the World was made of water.*

*De Nat. Deorum L. 1.

*Geogr. L. 15.

Which

Which agrees exactly with *Moſes*'s account of the Creation, viz. *That the Spirit of God moved upon the face of waters*; which St. *Peter* * expreſſes thus, *That by the word of God the heavens and the earth* (for ſo the Hebrews call the world) *were of old* ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ διὰ ὕδατος *conſtituted or made of water*; not *ſtanding out of the water*, as our Tranſlation renders it. * 2 Pet. 3. 5.

Nay *Ariſtotle* * himſelf, who was the great aſſertor of the eternity of the world, gives this account why the Gods were anciently repreſented by the Heathens as ſwearing by the lake *Styx*, becauſe *water* was ſuppoſed to be the *principle of all things*. And this, he tells us was the *moſt ancient opinion* concerning the original of the world; and that the *very oldeſt Writers of Theology*, and thoſe who liv'd *at the greateſt diſtance from his time*, were of this mind. And in the Book *de Mundo*, *, it is freely acknowledg'd to have been an *ancient Saying*, *and a general Tradition among all men*, *That all things are of God, and were made by him*. I will conclude this with that full Teſtimony of *Maximus Tyrius* * to this purpoſe: *However* (ſays he) *men may differ in other things yet they all agree in this* Law *or* Principle, *That there is one God*, *King and Father of all things*, &c. *This the* Greeks *ſay*, *this the* * Metaph. L. 1. c. 3.

* Cap. 6.

* Diſſer. tat. 1.

Bar-

Barbarians; *this those that live upon the Continent, and those that dwell by the Sea; the wise and the unwise.*

Secondly, We have likewise a most *ancient* and credible *History* of the beginning of the world; I mean the History of *Moses*, with which no Book in the world in point of antiquity can contend. I shall not now go about to strengthen my argument, by pleading the Divine authority of this Book; for which yet I could offer good evidence, if that were proper to the matter in hand. It is sufficient to my present purpose, that *Moses* have the ordinary credit of an Historian given him; which none in reason can deny him, he being cited by the most ancient of the Heathen Historians, and the antiquity of his writings never questioned by any of them, as *Josephus* * assures us.

* L. 1. contra Appion.

Now this History of *Moses* gives us a particular account of the beginning of the world, and of the creation of it by God. Which assertion of his is agreeable to the most ancient *Writers* among the *Heathen*, whether *Poets* or *Historians*. And several of the main parts of *Moses*'s History, as concerning the *Flood*, and the *first Fathers* of the *several Nations* of the World of which he gives a particular account, *Gen.* 10.) do very well accord with the most ancient

ancient accounts of *Prophane* History. And I do not know, whether any thing ought more to recommend the Writings of *Moſes* to a humane belief, than the eaſie and credible account which he gives of the original of the World, and of the firſt peopling of it.

As to the account of ancient times, both the *Egyptian* and *Chaldean* accounts, which are pretended by ſome to be ſo vaſtly different from that of the *Scriptures*, may for all that be, near the matter, eaſily reconcil'd with it *; if we do but admit what *Diodorus Siculus* and *Plutarch*, very credible perſons & diligent ſearchers into ancient Books, do moſt expreſly aſſure us, *viz.* that both thoſe *Nations* did anciently reckon months for years. And the account of the *Chineſes* is not hard to be reconcil'd with that of the *Septuagint*. Now in ſo nice and obſcure a matter, as the account of ancient times is, it ought to ſatisfie any fair and reaſonable enquirer, if they can be brought any whit near one another.

* Vid. Dr. *Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac.* where this is fully made out.

So that *univerſal Tradition*, and the moſt *ancient Hiſtory* in the world are clearly on our ſide. And if they be, one can hardly wiſh a more convincing argument. For if the world, and conſequently mankind, had a beginning, there is all the

the reaſon in the world to expect theſe two things: *Firſt*, that there ſhould be an *univerſal Tradition* concerning this matter; becauſe it was the moſt memorable thing that could be tranſmitted to poſterity. And this was eaſie to be done, if mankind ſprang from one common *root* and *original*, from whence this *Tradition* would naturally be univerſally diffus'd. *Secondly*, it may with the ſame reaſon be expected, that ſo remarkable a *thing* ſhould be recorded in the moſt ancient *Hiſtory*. Now both theſe have accordingly happened. But then, on the other hand, if the World was eternal and had no beginning, there could be no real ground for ſuch a *Tradition* or *Hiſtory*. And if ſuch a Tradition were at any time endeavoured to be ſet on foot, it is not eaſie to imagine how it ſhould at firſt gain entertainment, but much more difficult to conceive how ever it ſhould come to be *univerſally* propagated. For upon the *ſuppoſition* of thoſe who hold the eternity of the world, the world was always peopl'd; and if ſo, there could be no common-head or ſpring from whence ſuch a *Tradition* would naturally derive it ſelf into all parts of the world. So that unleſs all the world was ſometime of one *language*, and under one *government* (which it never was that we know of

of ſince it was peopl'd) no endeavour and induſtry could make ſuch a Tradition common.

If it be ſaid, that this Tradition began after ſome univerſal deluge, out of which poſſibly but one family might eſcape, and that poſſibly too of barbarous people; from whom any fond and groundleſs conceit might ſpring, and afterward ſpread it ſelf as mankind encreas'd. This I ſhall have occaſion to conſider in a more proper place. In the mean time I have ſhewn, even from the acknowledgment of *Ariſtotle* himſelf, that there was anciently ſuch a Tradition concerning the beginning of the world. Nay, if we may believe him, he himſelf was the very firſt aſſertor of the eternity of the world. For he * ſays expreſly, *That all the Philoſophers that were before him, did hold that the world was made.* Thus much for the *firſt* kind of *proof* this matter is capable of, namely, *teſtimony.*

* *De Cœlo* l. 1. c. 10.

2*dly*, The *probabilities of reaſon* do all likewiſe favour the beginning of the world: as

1. The want of any *Hiſtory* or *Tradition* ancienter than what is conſiſtent with the received opinion of the time of the worlds beginning; nay, the moſt ancient Hiſtories were written long after that time. This *Lucre-*

Lucretius, the famous *Epicurean*, urgeth as a ſtrong preſumption that the world had a beginning.

——Si nulla fuit genitalis origo
Terrarum & Cæli, ſemperque æterna fuere:
Cur ſupra bellum Thebanum, et funera Trojæ,
Non alias alij quoq; res cecinere Poetæ?

i. e. *If the world had no beginning*, how is it that the *Greek Poets* (the moſt ancient of their Writers) *mention nothing higher than the* Theban *war*, *and the deſtruction of* Troy? Were there from all eternity no memorable actions done till about that time? Or had mankind no way till of late to record them, and propagate the memory of them to poſterity? It is much, if men were from eternity, that they ſhould not find out the way of writing in all that *long* duration, which had paſt before that Time. Sure he was a fortunate man indeed, who after men had been eternally ſo dull as not to find it out, had the luck at laſt to hit upon it.

But it may be, the famous actions of former times were always recorded, but that the memorials of them have been ſeveral times loſt by univerſal deluges, which have now and then happen'd, and ſwept all away, except (it may be) two or three per-

perſons, that have eſcap'd, and begun the world again upon a new ſcore. This is the only refuge that the *atheiſt* hath to flye to, when he is preſt with this and the like arguments. But he cannot poſſibly eſcape this way. For theſe univerſal inundations muſt either be *natural* or *ſupernatural*. If they be *ſupernatural*, (as any man that conſiders well the frame of the world, and how hard it is to give a natural reaſon of them, would be enclin'd to think) then indeed it is eaſie to conceive, how a few of mankind, and no more, ſhould eſcape: Becauſe this will depend upon the pleaſure of that ſuperior Being which is ſuppoſed ſupernaturally to order theſe things. But this is to yield what we have all this while contended for, *viz.* That there is a God. But if they be *natural*, which the *athiſt* muſt ſay, then there is nothing to reſtrain them from a total deſtruction, not only of mankind, but of all the beaſts of the earth. This the *atheiſt* cannot deny, not only to be very poſſible, but exceeding probable; becauſe he grants it to have come ſo near the matter, that but very few eſcap'd, and, no doubt, with great difficulty. Now it is the greateſt wonder in the world, that a thing (according to their own ſuppoſition) ſo likely to happen, ſhould never have fallen

fallen out in an infinite duration. Will any man have the face to ſay that a thing is likely, which did never yet happen from all eternity? One would think that not only whatever is probable, but whatever can poſſibly happen, ſhould be brought about in that ſpace: So that if mankind had been from eternity, it had in all probability, I had almoſt ſaid, been deſtroyed from all eternity, but I may confidently ſay, long ſince ruin'd.

2. Another *probability* of the worlds beginning is, the account which we have of the *original of Learning and the moſt uſeful Arts* in ſeveral parts of the world. Now if the world had been eternal, theſe in all likelihood would have been found out, and generally ſpread long ago, and beyond the memory of all ages. There are ſome *Arts* indeed that are peculiarly convenient to ſome particular Nations, and others that are only ſerviceable to the humour and faſhions of one or more ages. Theſe are not likely to ſpread, and they may come in, and go out, and return again, as often as there is occaſion. But thoſe which are generally uſeful to mankind in all times and places, if they were once found out (and who would not think they ſhould in an eternal duration?) it is not imaginable but that they ſhould have been

been ſpread innumerable ages ſince: Nor can any man give a good reaſon how they ſhould ever be loſt, but by ſome ſuch accident as an univerſal deluge, which has been ſpoken to already. But now on the contrary, the beginnings of *Learning* and of rhe moſt uſeful *Arts* in ſeveral Nations, are very well known. And I add further, that where-ever Learning and Civil Arts heve come, this *Tradition* concerning the *beginning of the world* hath been moſt vigorous, and aſſerted with the greateſt clearneſs and confidence.

3. The ſeveral parts of which the world conſiſts, being (ſo far as by thoſe parts of it which we know, we can poſſibly judg of the reſt) in their nature corruptible; it is more than probable, that in an infinite duration this *frame of things* would long ſince have been diſſolv'd: eſpecially, if (as the *atheiſt* affirms) there be no *ſuperior being*, no wiſe and intelligent *principle* to repair and regulate it, and to prevent thoſe innumerable diſorders and calamitous accidents, which muſt in ſo long a ſpace in all probability have happen'd to it. This *Lucretius* * alſo urges as a convincing proof that the world was not eternal,

* L. 5.

Quare etiam nativa neceſſe eſt confiteare
Hæc eadem; neq; enim mortali corpore quæ

Ex infinito jam tempore adhuc potuiſſent
Immenſi validas ævi contemnere vires.

It muſt neceſſarily (ſays he) *be acknowledg'd, that the world had a beginning; otherwiſe thoſe things which are in their own nature corruptible, had never been able, from all eternity, to have held out againſt thoſe forcible and violent aſſaults which in an infinite duration muſt have happen'd.* Nay thus much *Ariſtotle* himſelf every where grants, that if the frame of the world be liable to diſſolution, it muſt of neceſſity be acknowledg'd to have had a beginning.

Theſe are the chief *probabilities*, on our ſide; which being taken together, and in their united force, have a great deal of conviction in them. Eſpecially if this be added, that there is no kind of *poſitive proof* ſo much as pretended on the other ſide. The utmoſt that *Ariſtotle* pretends to prove, is, That the world proceeded from God by the way of a natural and neceſſary effect, as light doth from the ſun. Which if it were true (as there is no tolerable ground for it) the World indeed would be without beginning, but not of it ſelf. And thus I have done with the *firſt* conſideration I propounded to ſpeak to, viz. *That there are fair proofs on our ſide, and as convincing as the nature of the thing*

is

is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other. I proceed therefore to the.

Second conſideration, That the moſt preſſing difficulties are on that ſide on which there is no proof.

Thoſe who deny a God, and hold the world to have been eternal, and of it ſelf, have only two things to object againſt us: The difficulties that there are in the *notion of a God*, and *in making the world of nothing*. To the *firſt* I anſwer: That we attribute nothing to God that hath any repugnancy or contradiction in it. *Power*, *wiſdom*, *goodneſs*, *juſtice*, and *truth*, have no repugnancy in them to our reaſon; becauſe we own theſe *Perfections* to be, in ſome degree, in our ſelves; and therefore they may be in the higheſt degree that is poſſible in another. The *eternity* of God, and his *immenſity*, and his *being of himſelf*, how difficult ſoever they may be to be conceived, yet theſe *perfections* muſt be granted to be ſome where; and therefore they may as well, nay much better, be aſcrib'd to God, in whom we ſuppoſe all other perfections to meet, than to any thing elſe. And as for Gods being a *ſpirit*, whatever difficulty there may be in convincing the notion of a *ſpirit*, yet the *atheiſt* muſt grant the thing, *viz.* that there is a *being*

or *principle* really distinct from *matter*: or else shew how *meer matter*, which is confessed by themselves to be void of *sense* and *understanding*, and to *move necessarily*, can produce any thing that has *sense*, *understanding*, and *liberty*. As to the *other* difficulty, of *making the world of nothing*, I shall only say this; that though it signifie an inconceivable excess of power, yet there can no contradiction be shewn in it. And it is every whit as easie to conceive that something should *be caus'd to be, that was not before*, as that any thing should *be of it self*; which yet must be granted on both sides; and therefore this *difficulty* ought not to be objected by either.

But then on the other side there are these *two* great and real *difficulties*. *First*, that men generally have always believed the contrary, That the World had a beginning, and was made by God. Which is a strong evidence, that this account of the existence of the world is more natural, and of a more easie conception to humane understanding. And indeed it is very natural to conceive that every thing which is imperfect (as the *world* and all the creatures in it must be acknowledged in many respects to be) had some cause which produc'd it, such as it is, and determin'd the bounds and limits of its perfection: but

that

that which is of it ſelf and without a cauſe, may be any thing, and have any perfection which does not imply a contradiction. *Secondly*, To aſſert mankind to have been of it ſelf, and without a cauſe, hath this invincible objection againſt it; That we plainly ſee every man to be from another. So that mankind is aſſerted to have no cauſe of its being, and yet every particular man muſt be acknowledged to have a father; which is every wit as abſurd in an infinite ſucceſſion of men, as in any finite number of generations. It is more eaſie indeed to conceive how a *conſtant* and *permanent being*, ſuppoſe *matter*, ſhould always have been of it ſelf; and then that *that* ſhould be the foundation of infinite ſucceſſive changes and alterations: But an infinite ſucceſſion of the generations of men without any permanent foundation, it utterly unimaginable. If it be ſaid that the *earth* was always, and in time did produce *men*, and that they ever ſince have produc'd one another; this is to run into one great abſurdity of the *Epicurean way*, which ſhall be conſider'd in its proper place.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as plainly and briefly as the nature of the argument would admit, to prove that the account which the *Scripture* gives of the *exiſtence*

of the world, is moſt credible, and agreeable to the reaſon of mankind; and that this *Firſt* account which the *atheiſt* gives of it, is altogether incredible. And now I expect after all this the *atheiſt* will complain, that all that hath been ſaid does not amount to a *ſtrict demonſtration* of the thing. It may be ſo. And if the atheiſt would undertake to *demonſtrate* the contrary, there might be ſome reaſon for this complaint. In the mean time I deſire to know, Whether when both ſides are agreed that the world is, and that it muſt either have its original from God, or have been always of it ſelf: And if it have been made evident, than on *one ſide* there are fair *proofs*, both from *teſtimony* and *reaſon*, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of: and no pretence of proof on the *other*: And that the *Difficulties* are moſt preſſing on that *ſide* which is deſtitute of proof: I ſay, if this have been made evident, I deſire to know, whether this be not, upon the matter, as ſatisfactory to a wiſe man as a *demonſtration*? For in this caſe, there can be no doubt on which ſide the clear advantage of evidence lies; and conſequently which way a prudent man ought to determine his aſſent.

I come now in the *Second* place, to conſider

ſider the *other account* which another ſort of *atheiſts*, thoſe whom I call the *Epicurean*, do give of the *exiſtence of the world*. And 'tis this. They ſuppoſe the *matter* of which the world is conſtituted, to be eternal and of it ſelf; and then an *infinite empty ſpace* for the infinite little parts of this matter (which they call *atomes*) to move and play in; and that theſe being always in motion, did after infinite trials and encounters, without any counſel or deſign, and without the diſpoſal and contrivance of any wiſe and intelligent *being*, at laſt by a lucky caſualty entangle and ſettle themſelves in this beautiful and regular *frame* of the *world* which we now ſee. And that the *earth*, being at firſt in its full vigour and fruitfulneſs, did then bring forth *men* and all other ſorts of *living creatures*, as it does *plants now*.

This is in ſhort the *Epicurean* account of the original of the world, which, as abſurd as it is, *Lucretius* * hath very elegantly expreſſed in theſe *verſes*.

Sed quibus ille modis conjectus materiai,
Fundarit cœlum ac terram, pontiq; profunda
Soliſque & lunæ curſus, ex ordine ponam.
Nam certe neq; conſilio primordia rerum
Ordine ſe quæque, atq; ſagaci mente locarunt
Nec quos quæq; darent motus pepigere pro-

Sed quia multa modis multis primordia re-
Ex infinito jam tempore percita plagis (rum
Ponderibusq; ſuis conſuerunt concita ferri,
Omnimodiſq; coire, atq; omnia pertentare,
Quæcunque inter ſe poſſent congreſſa creare:
Propterea fit, uti magnum volgata per ævum
Omnigenos cœtus, & motus experiundo,
Tandem ea conveniant, quæ ut convenere, re-
Magnarum rerum fiant exordia ſæpe, (pente
Terrai, maris, & cœli, generiſq; animantum.

Thus *he*, like a good *Poet*, but a very bad maker and contriver of the world. For I appeal to any man of reaſon, whether any thing can be more unreaſonable, than obſtinatly to impute an effect to *chance*, which carries in the very face of it all the arguments and characters of a *wiſe deſign* and *contrivance*? Was ever any conſiderable work, in which there was required great variety of parts, and a regular and orderly diſpoſition of thoſe parts, done by *chance*? Will *chance* fit *means* to *ends*, and that in ten thouſand inſtances, and not fail in any one? How often might a man after he had jumbled a ſet of letters in a bag, fling them out upon the ground before they would fall into an exact Poem, yea, or ſo much as make a good diſcourſe in proſe? And may not a little *book* be as eaſily made by chance, as this great

great *volume* of the world? How long might a man be in ſprinkling colours upon canvas with a careleſs hand, before they would happen to make the exact picture of a man? And is a man eaſier made by chance than his *picture*? How long might twenty thouſand *blind men*, which ſhould be ſent out from the ſeveral remote parts of *England*, wander up and down, before they would all meet upon *Salisbury plains* and fall into *rank* and *file* in the exact order of an *army*? And yet this is much more eaſie to be imagined, than how the innumerable *blind parts* of *matter* ſhould *rendezvous* themſelves into a *world*. A man that ſees *Henry* the *Seventh*'s *chappel* at *Weſtminſter*, might with as good reaſon maintain (yea, with much better, conſidering the vaſt difference betwixt that little *ſtructure*, and the huge fabrick of the world) that it was never contriyed or built by any man, but that the ſtones did by chance grow into thoſe curious figures into which they ſeem to have been cut and graven; And that *upon a time* (as tales uſually begin) the *materials* of that building, the *ſtone*, *morter*, *timber*, *iron*, *lead*, and *glaſs*, happily met together and very fortunately rang'd themſelves into that delicate order in which we ſee them now ſo cloſe compacted, that it muſt be a very great

great *chance* that parts them again. What would the world think of a man that ſhould advance ſuch an *opinion* as this, and write a *book* for it? If they would do him right, they ought to look upon him as mad: but yet with a little more reaſon than any man can have to ſay, that the World was made by chance; or that the *firſt men* grew up out of the earth as *plants* do now. For can any thing be more ridiculous and againſt all reaſon, than to aſcribe the production of men to the firſt fruitfulneſs of the earth, without ſo much as *one* inſtance and experiment in any age or hiſtory, to countenance ſo monſtrous a ſuppoſition? The thing is at firſt-ſight ſo groſs and palpable, that no diſcourſe about it can make it more apparent. And yet theſe ſhameful *beggars of Principles*, who give this precatious account of the original of things, aſſume to themſelves to be the *men of reaſon*, the *great wits* of the world; the only *cautious* and wary perſons that hate to be impoſed upon, that muſt have convincing evidence for every thing, and can admit of nothing without a clear demonſtration for it.

II. *Speculative atheiſm* is unreaſonable, becauſe it gives no reaſonable account of the *univerſal conſent* of mankind in this apprehenſion, *that there is a God*. That men

do

do generally believe a God, and have done in all ages, the preſent experience of the world, and the records of former times do abundantly teſtifie. Now how comes this perſwaſion to have gained ſo univerſal a poſſeſſion of the mind of man, and to have found ſuch general entertainment in all *Nations*, even thoſe that are moſt *barbarous*? If there be no ſuch thing as God in the world, how comes it to paſs that this object doth continually encounter our underſtandings? Whence is it that we are ſo perpetually *haunted* with the *apparition* of a Deity, and followed with it where-ever we go? If it be not natural to the mind of man, but proceeds from ſome accidental diſtemper of our underſtandings, how comes it to be ſo univerſal, that no differences of *age*, or *temper*, or *education* can wear it out, and ſet any conſiderable number of men free from it? Into what can we reſolve this ſtrong inclination of mankind to this error and miſtake? How come all Nations to be thus ſeduced? It is altogether unimaginable, but that the reaſon of ſo univerſal a conſent in all places and ages of the world, and among all differences of of perſons, ſhould be *one* and *conſtant*. But no *one* and *conſtant* reaſon of this can be given, but from the nature of mans mind and underſtanding, which

which hath this notion of a Deity born with it, and ſtamped upon it; or, which is all one, is of ſuch a frame, that in the free uſe and exerciſe of it ſelf, it will find out God; And what more reaſonable than to think, that if we be Gods workmanſhip, he ſhould ſet this *mark* of himſelf upon all *reaſonable creatures*, that they may know to whom they belong, and may acknowledg the *author* of their beings. This ſeems to be a credible and ſatisfactory account of ſo *univerſal* a *conſent* in this matter. But now what doth the *atheiſt* reſolve this into? He is not at one with himſelf what account to give of it, nor can it be expected he ſhould. For he that will over-look the *true* reaſon of a thing which uſually is but *one*, may eaſily find *many falſe* ones, *error* being infinite. But there are *three* which he principally relies upon, *fear*, *tradition*, and *policy of State*. I ſhall briefly conſider theſe.

Firſt, He would make us believe, that this apprehenſion of a God, doth ſpring from an *infinite jealouſie* in the mind of man, and an *endleſs fear* of the worſt that may happen; according to that *divine ſaying* of the Poet (which he can never ſufficiently admire.)

Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor,---
Fear firſt made Gods. So that it is granted

on

on both ſides, that the *fear* of a *Deity* doth univerſally poſſeſs the minds of men. Now the queſtion is, whether it be more likely that the exiſtence of a God ſhould be the cauſe of this fear, or that this fear ſhould be the cauſe why men imagine there is a God? If there be a God, who hath impreſſed this image of himſelf upon the mind of Man, there's great reaſon why all men ſhould ſtand in awe of him: But if there be no God, it is not eaſie to conceive how *fear* ſhould create an univerſal confidence and aſſurance in men that there is one. For, whence ſhould this *fear* come? It muſt be either from *without*, from the ſuggeſtion of others, who firſt tell us there is ſuch a *being*, and then our fear believes it; or elſe it muſt ariſe from *within*, viz. from the nature of man, which is apt to fancy dreadful and terrible things. If from the ſuggeſtion of others who tell us ſo, the queſtion returns, who told *them* ſo? and will never be ſatisfied till the firſt author of this report be found out. So that this account of *fear* reſolves it ſelf into *tradition*, which ſhall be ſpoken to in its proper place. But if it be ſaid, that this *fear* ariſeth from *within*, from the nature of man, which is apt to imagine dreadful things, this likewiſe is liable to inexplicable difficulties. For, *Firſt*, the proper *ob-*

ject

ject of *fear* is ſomething that is *dreadful*; that is, ſomething that threatens men with harm, or danger; and that in God muſt either be *power* or *juſtice*; and ſuch an object as this *fear* indeed may create: But *goodneſs* and *mercy* are eſſential to the notion of a God, as well as *power* and *juſtice*: Now how ſhould *fear* put men upon fancying a *being* that is infinitely *good* and *merciful*? No man hath reaſon to be afraid of ſuch a *being*, as *ſuch*. So that the *atheiſt* muſt join another cauſe to *fear*, viz. *hope*, to enable men to create this imagination of a God. And what would the *product* of theſe two *contrary paſſions* be? the imagination of a *being*, which we ſhould *fear* would do us as much *harm*, as we could *hope* it would do us *good*; which would be *quid pro quo*, and which our reaſon would oblige us to lay aſide ſo ſoon as we had fancied it, becauſe it would ſignifie juſt nothing. But, *Secondly*, ſuppoſe *fear* alone could do it; how comes the mind of man to be ſubject to ſuch groundleſs and unreaſonable *fears*? The *Ariſtotelian* atheiſt will ſay, it always was ſo; But this is to *affirm*, and not to give any account of a thing. The *Epicurean* atheiſt, if he will ſpeak conſonantly to himſelf, muſt ſay, that there happened in the *original* conſtitution of the *firſt* men, ſuch

ſuch a contexture of *atomes*, as doth naturally diſpoſe men to theſe *panick* fears; unleſs he will ſay, that the *firſt* men when they grew out of the earth, and afterwards broke looſe from their root, finding themſelves weak, and naked, and unarmed, and meeting with ſeveral fierce creatures ſtronger than themſelves, they were put into ſuch a fright as did a little diſtemper their underſtandings, and let looſe their imaginations to endleſs ſuſpitions and unbounded jealouſies, which did at laſt ſettle in the conceit of an inviſible *being*, infinitely powerful, and able to do them harm; and being fully poſſeſt with this apprehenſion (nothing being more ordinary, than for crazed perſons to believe their own *fancies*) they became *religious*; and afterwards when mankind began to be propagated in the way of *generation*, then *Religion* obliged them to inſtill theſe *principles* into their children in their tender years, that ſo they might make the greater impreſſion upon them; and this courſe having been continued ever ſince, the notion of a God hath been kept up in the world. This is very ſuitable to *Epicurus* his *hypotheſis* of the original of men; but if any man think fit to ſay thus, I cannot think it fit to confute him. *Thirdly*, whether men were from all eternity

ſuch

ſuch timorous and fanciful creatures, or happened to be made ſo in the firſt conſtitution of things; it ſeems however, that this *fear* of a Deity hath a foundation in nature. And if it be *natural*, ought we not rather to conclude, that there is ſome ground and reaſon for theſe *fears*, and that nature hath not planted them in us to no purpoſe, than that they are vain and groundleſs? There is no *principle* that *Ariſtotle* (the grand aſſertor of the eternity of the world) doth more frequently inculcate than this, *That Nature doth nothing in vain*; and the *atheiſt* himſelf is forc'd to acknowledg (and ſo every man muſt who attentively conſiders the frame of the world) That although things were made by chance, yet they have happened as well as if the greateſt wiſdom had had the ordering and contriving of them. And ſurely wiſdom would never have planted ſuch a vain principle as the fear of a Deity in the nature of man, if there had not been a God in the world.

Secondly, If *fear* be not a ſufficient account of this univerſal conſent, the *atheiſt* thinks it may very probably be reſolved into *univerſal Tradition*. But this likewiſe is liable to great exception. For, whence came this tradition? It muſt begin ſome time, it muſt have its original from

from ſome body; and it were very well worth our knowing, who that *man* was that firſt raiſed this *ſpirit*, which all the reaſon of mankind could never *conjure* down ſince. *Where* did he live, and *when*? In what *countrey*, and in what *age* of the world? *What was his name, or his ſons name, that we may know him*? This the atheiſt can give no punctual account of; only he imagines it not improbable, that ſome body, long ago (no body knows when) beyond the memory of all ages, did ſtart ſuch a notion in the world, and that it hath paſt for currant ever ſince. But if this *tradition* be granted ſo very ancient as to have been before all Books and to be elder than any Hiſtory, it may for any thing any body can tell, have been from the beginning; and then it is much more likely to be a notion which was bred in the mind of man, and born with him, than a *tradition* tranſmitted from hand to hand through all generations; eſpecially if we conſider how many *rude* and *barbarous Nations* there are in the world, which conſent in the opinion of a God, and yet have ſcarce any certain *tradition* of any thing that was done among them but two or three ages before.

Thirdly, But if neither of theſe be ſatisfactory, he hath one way more; which

although it ſignifie little to men of ſober and ſevere Reaſon, yet it very unhappily hits the jealous and ſuſpicious humour of the generality of men; who from the experience they have had of themſelves and others, are very apt to ſuſpect that every body, but eſpecially their *ſuperiours* and *governours*, have a deſign to impoſe upon them for their own ends. In ſhort, it is this; that this noiſe about a God is a meer *ſtate-engine*, and a *politick device*, invented at firſt by ſome *great Prince*, or *Miniſter of State*, to keep people in awe and order. And if ſo, from hence (ſaith the atheiſt) we may eaſily apprehend, how from ſuch an original it might be generally propagated, and become univerſally *currant*, having the ſtamp of publick authority upon it. Beſides, that *people* have always been found eaſie to comply with the inclinations of their *Prince*. And from hence likewiſe we may ſee the reaſon, why this notion hath continued ſo long. For being found by experience to be ſo excellent an inſtrument of government, we may be ſure it would always be cheriſhed and kept up.

And now *he triumphs*, and thinks the buſineſs is very clear: Thus it was; ſome time or other, (moſt probably towards the beginning of the world, if it had a begin-

beginning, when all mankind was under one univerſal Monarch) ſome great *Nebuchadnezzar* ſet up this *image* of a *Deity*, and commanded *all people and nations to fall down and worſhip it*: And this being found a ſucceſsful device, to awe people into obedience to government, it hath been continued to this day, and is like to laſt to the end of the world. To this *fine conjecture* I have theſe four things to ſay:

1. That all this is meer conjecture and ſuppoſition; *he* cannot bring the leaſt ſhadow of proof or evidence for any one *tittle* of it.

2. This ſuppoſition grants the opinion of a God to conduce very much to the ſupport of government and order in the world, and conſequently to be very beneficial to mankind. So that the atheiſt cannot but acknowledg that it is great pity that it ſhould not be true, and that it is the common intereſt of mankind, if there were but probable arguments for it, not to admit of any ſleight reaſons againſt it; and to puniſh all thoſe who would ſeduce men to atheiſm, as the great *diſturbers* of the world, and *peſts* of humane ſociety.

3. This ſuppoſition can have nothing of certainty in it, unleſs this be true, *that*

whoever makes a politick advantage of other mens principles, ought to be presumed to contrive those principles into them. Whereas it is much more common (because more easie) for men to serve their own ends of those principles or opinions, which they do not put into men, but find there. So that if the question of a God were to be decided by the probability of this conjecture, (which the atheist applauds himself most in) it would be concluded in the affirmative: It being much more likely, since Politicans *reap* the advantages of obedience and a more ready submission to government from mens believing that there is a God, that they found the minds of men *prepossessed* to their hands with the notion of a God, than that they *planted* it there.

4. We have as much evidence of the contrary to this *supposition*, as such a thing is capable of, *viz.* that it was not an *arcanum imperii*, a *secret of government*, to propagate the belief of a God among the people, when the governours themselves knew it to be a cheat. For we find in the Histories of all ages of which we have any records, (and of other ages we cannot possibly judg) that Princes have not been more secure from troubles of conscience

ſcience, and the fears of religion, and the terrors of another world, (nay, many of them more ſubject to theſe) than other men, as I could give many inſtances, and thoſe no mean ones: What made *Caligula* creep under the Bed when it thunder'd? What made *Tiberius* (that great Maſter of the *crafts of government*) complain ſo much of the grievous *ſtings* and *laſhes* he felt in his conſcience? What made *Cardinl Wolſey* (that great *Miniſter of State* in our own Nation) to pour forth his ſoul in thoſe ſad words? *Had I been as diligent to pleaſe my God as I have been to pleaſe my King, he would not have forſaken me now in my gray hairs*? What reaſon for ſuch actions and ſpeeches, if theſe *great men* had known that religion was but a cheat. But if they knew nothing of this *ſecret*, I think we may ſafely conclude, that the notion of a God did not come from the *Court*; that it was not the invention of Politicians, and a juggle of State, to cozen the the people into obedience.

And now from all this that hath been ſaid it ſeems to be very evident, that the general conſent of mankind in this apprehenſion *that there is a God*, muſt in all reaſon be aſcribed to ſome more *certain* and *univerſal* cauſe than *fear* or *tradi-*

tion, or *State-policy*, *viz.* to *this*, that God himſelf hath wrought this *image* of himſelf upon the mind of man, and ſo woven it into the very *frame* of his *being*, that (like *Phidias* his Picture in *Minerva*'s Shield) it can never totally be defaced without the ruin of humane nature.

I know but one *objection* that this diſcourſe is liable to, which is this; that the univerſal conſent of mankind in the apprehenſion of a God, is no more an argument that *He* really is, than the general agreement of ſo many Nations, for ſo many ages, in the worſhip of many gods, is an argument that there are many.

To this I anſwer, 1. That the generality of the *Philoſophers* and wiſe men of all Nations and ages did diſſent from the multitude in theſe things. They believed but one Supreme deity, which, with reſpect to the various benefits men received from him, had ſeveral titles beſtowed upon him. And although they did ſervilely comply with the people in worſhipping God by ſenſible images and repreſentations, yet it appears by their writings that they deſpiſed this way of worſhip as ſuperſtitious, and unſuitable to the nature of God. So that *Polytheiſm* and *Idolatry* are far from being able to pretend to univerſal conſent, from their having had the vote of the mul-

multitude in moſt Nations, for ſeveral ages together. Becauſe the opinion of the vulgar ſeparated from the conſent and approbation of the wiſe, ſignifies no more than a great many *cyphers* would do without *figures*.

2. The groſs *ignorance* and *miſtakes* of the *Heathen* about *God* and his worſhip, are a good argument that there is a God; becauſe they ſhew, that men ſunk into the moſt degenerate condition, into the greateſt blindneſs and darkneſs imaginable, do yet retain ſome ſenſe and awe of a Deity; that Religion is a property of our natures; and that the notion of a Deity is intimate to our underſtandings, and ſticks cloſe to them; ſeeing Men will rather have any God than *none*; and rather than want a Deity, they will worſhip any thing.

3. That there have been ſo many *falſe* Gods devis'd, is rather an argument that there is a *true one*, than that there is none. *There* would be no *counterfeits*, but for the ſake of ſomething that is *real*. For, though all *pretenders* ſeem to be what they *really* are not, yet they *pretend* to be ſomething that *really* is. For, to *counterfeit* is to put on the likeneſs and appearance of ſome real excellency. There would be no *Braſs-money*, if there were not *good and lawful money*. *Briſtol-ſtones* would not pretend

to be diamonds, if there never had been any diamonds. Thoſe *Idols* in *Henry* the ſeventh's time (as Sir *Francis Bacon* calls them) *Lambert Simnell*, and *Perkin Warbeck*, had never been ſet up, if there had not once been a real *Plantagenet* and *Duke of York*. So the *Idols* of the Heathen, though they be ſet up in affront to the *true* God, yet they rather prove that there is *one*, than the contrary.

III. *Speculative atheiſm* is abſurd, becauſe it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. *Ariſtotle* hath long ſince well obſerved, how unreaſonable it is to expect the ſame kind of *proof* and *evidence* for *every* thing, which we have for *ſome* things. *Mathematical* things, being of an abſtracted nature are capable of the cleareſt and ſtricteſt *Demonſtration*: But Concluſions in *Natural Philoſophy* are capable of proof by an *Induction* of experiments; things of a *moral* nature, by *moral* arguments; and *matters of fact*, by *credible teſtimony*. And though none of theſe be capable of that ſtrict kind of *demonſtration*, which Mathematical matters are; yet have we an undoubted aſſurance of them, when they are proved by the beſt arguments that things of that kind will bear. No man can *demonſtrate* to me (unleſs we will call every argument that is fit

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to convince a wiſe man, a *demonſtration*) that there is ſuch an *Iſland* in *America* as *Jamaica*. Yet upon the teſtimony of credible perſons who have ſeen it, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as I am from doubting of the cleareſt Mathematical demonſtration. So that this is to be entertained as a firm *Principle* by all thoſe who pretend to be certain of any thing at all: *That when any thing in any of theſe kinds, is proved by as good Arguments as that thing is capable of, and we have as great aſſurance that it is, as we could poſſibly have, ſuppoſing it were, we ought not in reaſon to make any doubt of the exiſtence of that thing.*

Now to apply this to the preſent caſe. The being of a God is not *Mathematically* demonſtrable, nor can it be expected it ſhould, becauſe only Mathematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be proved *immediately* by *ſenſe*, becauſe *God* being ſuppoſed to be a *pure ſpirit*, cannot be the *object* of any *corporeal ſenſe*. But yet we have as great aſſurance that there is a God, as the nature of the thing to be proved is capable of; and as we could in reaſon expect to have, ſuppoſing that he were. For let us ſuppoſe there were ſuch a *Being* as an *Infinite Spirit*, cloathed with all poſſible perfection, *that*

is,

is, as *good* and *wiſe* and *powerful*, &c. as can be imagined. What conceivable ways are there whereby we ſhould come to be aſſured that there is ſuch a *Being*, but either by an *internal impreſſion* of the notion of a God upon our minds; or elſe by ſuch external and viſible *effects*, as our Reaſon tells us muſt be attributed to ſome *cauſe*; and which we cannot without great violence to our underſtandings attribute to any other cauſe, but ſuch a *Being*, as we conceive *God* to be, *that is*, *one* that is infinitely *good*, and *wiſe*, and *powerful*? Now we have this double *aſſurance* that there is a God; and greater, or other than this the thing is not capable of: If God ſhould aſſume a body, and preſent himſelf before our eyes, this might amaze us, but could not give us any rational aſſurance that there is an *infinite Spirit*. If he ſhould work a *miracle*; *this* could not in reaſon convince an atheiſt more than the arguments he already hath for it. If the *atheiſt* then were to *ask a ſign in the heaven above*, *or in the earth beneath*, what could he deſire God to do for his conviction, more than he hath already done? Could he deſire him to work a greater Miracle than to make a world? Why, if God ſhould carry this *perverſe man* out of the limits of this world, and ſhew him a *new*

heaven

heaven and a *new earth*, ſpringing out of nothing; he might ſay, that innumerable parts of matter chanc'd juſt then to rally together, and to form themſelves into this new world, and that God did not make it. Thus you ſee, that we have all the rational aſſurance of a God that the thing is capable of, and that *atheiſm* is abſurd and unreaſonable in requiring more.

IV. The *atheiſt* is unreaſonable, becauſe he pretends to know that which no man can know, and to be certain of that which no body can be certain of; that is *that there is no God*, and which is conſequent upon this (as I ſhall ſhew afterwards) *that it is not poſſible there ſhould be one.* And the atheiſt muſt pretend to know this certainly. For it were the greateſt folly in the world for a man to deny and deſpiſe God, if he be not certain that *He* is not. Now whoever pretends to be certain that there is no God, hath this great diſadvantage, he pretends to be certain of a *pure negative*. But of *negatives* we have far the leaſt certainty, and they are uſually *hardeſt*, and many times *impoſſible* to be proved. Indeed ſuch *negatives* as only deny ſome particular *mode* or manner of a things exiſtence, a man may have a certainty of *them*; becauſe when we ſee things

to

to be, we may ſee what they are, and in what manner they do, or do not exiſt. *For inſtance*, we may be certain that man is not a creature that hath wings, becauſe this only concerns the manner of his exiſtence; and we ſeeing what he is, may certainly know that he is not ſo, or ſo. But *pure negatives*, that is, ſuch as abſolutely deny the exiſtence of things, or the poſſibility of their exiſtence, can never be proved. For after all that can be ſaid againſt a thing this will ſtill be true, that many things poſſibly are, which we know not of, and that many more things may be than are; and if ſo, after all our arguments againſt a thing, it will be uncertain whether it be or not. And this is univerſally true, unleſs the thing denied to be, do plainly imply a contradiction; from which I have already ſhewn the notion of a God to be free. Now the atheiſt pretends to be certain of a *pure negative*, *viz.* that there is no ſuch being as God, and that it is not poſſible there ſhould be: But no man can reaſonably pretend to know thus much, but he muſt pretend to know all things that are, or can be; which if any man ſhould be ſo vain as to pretend to, yet it is to be hoped, that no body would be ſo weak as to believe him.

V. *Spe-*

V. *Speculative atheiſm* is unreaſonable, becauſe it contradicts it ſelf. There is this great contradiction in the denial of a God. He that denies a God, ſays that *that* is *impoſſible* which yet he muſt grant to be *poſſible*. He ſays it is *impoſſible* that there ſhould be ſuch a *being* as God, in ſaying that *de facto* there is no ſuch *being*. For *eternity* being eſſential to the notion of a God, if there be not a God already, it is *impoſſible* now that there ſhould be one; becauſe ſuch a *being* as is ſuppoſed to be eſſentially *eternal* and *without beginning*, cannot *now begin to be*. And yet he muſt grant it *poſſible*, that there ſhould be ſuch a *being*; becauſe it is poſſible there ſhould be ſuch a *being as hath all poſſible perfection*; and ſuch a *being* as this is that which we call *God*, and is that very thing which the atheiſt denies, and others affirm to be. For he that denies a God, muſt deny ſuch a being as all the world deſcribe God to be; and this is the general notion which all men have of God, *that he is a being as perfect as is poſſible*; that is, endued with all ſuch perfections as do not imply a contradiction, which none of thoſe perfections which we attribute to God do, as I have already prov'd.

II. *Speculative atheiſm* as it is an *unreaſonable*, ſo is it a moſt *imprudent* and uncomfortable

comfortable opinion: And that upon these *two* accounts. *First*, because it is against the present interest and happiness of mankind. *Secondly*, because it is infinitely hazardous and unsafe in the issue.

1. It is against the present interest and happiness of mankind. If *atheism* were the general Opinion of the World, it would be infinitely prejudicial to the peace and happiness of *humane Society*, and would open a wide door to all manner of confusion and disorder. But this I shall not now insist upon, because I design a particular *discourse* of *that* by it self.

I shall at present content my self to shew, how uncomfortable an opinion this would be to particular persons. For nothing can be more evident, than that *man* is not sufficient of himself to his own happiness. He is liable to many evils and miseries, which he can neither prevent, nor redress. He is full of wants which he cannot supply, and compass'd about with infirmities which he cannot remove, and obnoxious to dangers which he can never sufficiently provide against. Consider *man* without the protection and conduct of a *superiour Being*, and he is secure of nothing that he enjoys in this world, and uncertain of every thing that he hopes for. He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help,

and

and eagerly to desire what he is never likely to obtain. *Man walketh in a vain shew, and disquieteth himself in vain.* He courts happiness in a thousand shapes, and the faster he pursues it, the faster it flies from him. His hopes and expectations are bigger than his enjoyments, and his fears and jealousies more troublesome than the evils themselves which he is so much afraid of. He is liable to a great many inconveniences every moment of his life, and is continually insecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life it self. And besides all this, after all his endeavours to the contrary, he finds himself naturally to dread a *superiour Being*, that can defeat all his designs, and disappoint all his hopes, and make him miserable beyond all his fears. He has oftentimes secret misgivings concerning another life after this, and fearful apprehensions of an invisible Judg; and thereupon he is full of anxiety concerning his condition in another world, and sometimes plung'd into that anguish and despair that he grows weary of himself. So that the *atheist* deprives himself of all the comfort that the apprehensions of a God can give a man, and yet is liable to all the trouble and disquiet of those apprehensions.

I do not ſay that theſe Inconveniences do happen to all; but every one is in danger of them. For man's nature is evidently ſo contriv'd, as does plainly diſcover how unable he is to make himſelf happy. So that he muſt neceſſarily look abroad, and ſeek for happineſs ſomewhere elſe. And if there be no *ſuperiour Being*, in whoſe care of him he may repoſe his confidence, and quiet his mind: If he have no comfortable expectations of another life, to ſuſtain him under the evils and calamities he is liable to in this world, he is certainly *of all creatures the moſt miſerable*. There are none of us but may happen to fall into thoſe circumſtances of danger, or want, or pain, or ſome other ſort of calamity, that we can have no hopes of relief or comfort, but from *God* alone; none in all the world to fle to, but *Him*. And what would men do in ſuch a caſe, if it were not for *God*? Humane nature is moſt certainly liable to deſperate exigencies, and he is not happy that is not provided againſt the worſt that may happen. It is bad to be reduc'd to ſuch a condition, as to be deſtitute of all comfort. And yet men are many times brought to that extremity, that if it were not for God, they would not know what to do with themſelves, or how to enjoy themſelves for one hour,

hour, or to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable conſiderations under their preſent anguiſh and ſufferings. All men naturally flye to God in extremity; and the moſt atheiſtical perſon in the world when he is forſaken of all hopes of any other relief, is forc'd to acknowledg him, and would be glad to have ſuch a friend.

Can it then be a wiſe and reaſonable deſign, to endeavour to baniſh the belief of a God out of the world? Not to ſay how impious it is in reſpect of God, nothing can be more malicious to men, and more effectually undermine the only foundation of our happineſs. For if there were no God in the world, man would be in a much more wretched and diſconſolate condition, than the creatures below him. For they are only ſenſible of preſent pain, and when it is upon them they bear it as they can. But they are not at all apprehenſive of evils at a diſtance, nor tormented with the fearful proſpect of what may befall them hereafter: nor are they plung'd into deſpair, upon conſideration that the evils they lye under are like to continue, and are incapable of a remedy. And as they have no apprehenſion of theſe things, ſo they need no comfort againſt them. But mankind is liable to all the ſame evils, and many others; which are ſo much the

greater, becauſe they are aggravated and ſet on by the reſtleſs workings of our minds, and exaſperated by the ſmart reflections and frettings of our own thoughts: And if there be no God, we are wholly without comfort under all theſe, and without any other remedy than what time will give. For if the providence of God be taken away, what ſecurity have we againſt thoſe innumerable dangers and miſchiefs to which humane nature is continually expos'd? What conſolation under them, when we are reduc'd to that condition, that no creature can give us any hopes of relief? But if we believe that there is a God that takes care of us, and we be careful to pleaſe him; this cannot but be a mighty comfort to us, both under the preſent ſenſe of affliction, and the apprehenſion of evils at a diſtance. For in that caſe, we are ſecure of one of theſe three things. Either that God by his providence will prevent the evils we fear, if that be beſt for us: Or that he will ſuppport us under them when they are preſent, and add to our ſtrength as he encreaſeth our burden: Or that he will make them the occaſion of a greater good to us, by turning them either to our advantage in this world, or the encreaſe of our happineſs in the next. Now every one of theſe conſiderations

ſiderations has a great deal of comfort in it, for which if there were no God, there could be no ground. Nay, on the contrary, the moſt real foundation of our unhappineſs would be laid in our Reaſon; and we ſhould be ſo much more miſerable than the beaſts, by how much we have a quicker apprehenſion, and a deeper conſideration of things.

So that if a man had arguments ſufficient to perſwade him that there is no God (as there is infinite reaſon to the contrary) yet the belief of a God is ſo neceſſary to the comfort and happineſs of our lives, that a wiſe man could not but be heartily troubled to quit ſo pleaſant an error, and to part with a deluſion which is apt to yeild ſuch unſpeakable ſatisfaction to the mind of man. Did but men conſider the true notion of God, he would appear to be ſo lovely a Being, and ſo full of goodneſs and of all deſirable perfections, that even thoſe very perſons who are of ſuch irregular underſtandings as not to believe that there is a God, yet could not (if they underſtood themſelves) refrain from wiſhing with all their hearts that there were one. For is it not really deſirable to every man, that there ſhould be ſuch a *Being* in the world, as takes care of the frame of it, that it do not run into confuſion,

and in that diſorder ruin mankind? That there ſhould be ſuch a Being, as takes particular care of every one of us, and loves us, and delights to do us good; as underſtands all our wants, and is able and willing to relieve us in our greateſt ſtraits, when nothing elſe can; to preſerve us in our greateſt dangers, to aſſiſt us againſt our worſt enemies, and to comfort us under our ſharpeſt ſufferings, when all other things ſet themſelves againſt us? Is it not every man's intereſt, that there ſhould be ſuch a Governour of the world as really deſigns our happineſs, and hath omitted nothing that is neceſſary to it; as would govern us for our advantage, and will require nothing of us but what is for our good, and yet will infinitely reward us for the doing of that which is beſt for our ſelves? that will puniſh any man that ſhould go about to injure us, or to deal otherwiſe with us than himſelf in the like caſe would be dealt withall by us? In a word, ſuch a one, as is ready to be reconcil'd to us when we have offended him, and is ſo far from taking little advantages againſt us for every failing, that he is willing to pardon our moſt wilful miſcarriages upon our repentance and amendment? And we have reaſon to believe God to be ſuch a Being, if he be at all.

Why

Why then ſhould any man be troubl'd that there is ſuch a Being as this, or think himſelf concern'd to ſhut him out of the world? How could ſuch a Governour as this be wanting in the world, that is ſo great a comfort and ſecurity to mankind, and *the confidence of all the ends of the earth*? If God be ſuch a being as I have deſcrib'd, *two* to the world if it were without him. This would be a thouſand times greater loſs to mankind, and of more diſmal conſequence, and if it were true, ought to affect us with more grief and horrour, than the extinguiſhing of the Sun.

Let but all things be well conſider'd, and I am very confident, that if a wiſe and conſiderate man were left to himſelf and his own choice, to wiſh the greateſt good to himſelf he could deviſe; after he had ſearch'd heaven and earth, the *ſum* of all his wiſhes would be this, *that there were juſt ſuch a Being as God is*; Nor would he chuſe any other benefactor, or friend, or protector for himſelf, or governour for the whole world; than infinite power, conducted and managed by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs and juſtice, which is the true *notion* of a God.

Nay, ſo neceſſary is God to the happineſs of mankind, that though there were

no God, yet the atheiſt himſelf, upon ſecond thoughts, would judg it convenient that the generality of men ſhould believe that there is one. For when the atheiſt had attain'd his end, and (if it were a thing poſſible) had blotted the notion of a God out of the minds of men; mankind would in all probability grow ſo melancholy and ſo unruly a thing, that *he himſelf* would think it fit in policy, to contribute his beſt endeavours to the reſtoring of mankind to their former belief. Thus hath God ſecur'd the belief of *himſelf* in the world, againſt all attempts to the contrary; not only by rivetting the notion of himſelf into our natures, but likewiſe by making the belief of his being neceſſary to the peace and tranquillity of our minds, and to the quiet and happineſs of humane Society.

So that if we conſult our *reaſon*, we cannot but *believe* that there is; if our *intereſt*, we cannot but hartily *wiſh* that there were, ſuch a Being as God in the world. Every thing within us, and without us, gives us notice, of him. His name is written upon our hearts; and in every creature, there are ſome prints and footſteps of Him. Every moment we feel our dependance upon Him, and do by daily experience find that we can neither be happy with-

without Him, nor think our ſelves ſo.

I confeſs, it is not a wicked man's intereſt, *If* he reſolve to continue ſuch, that there ſhould be a God; but then it is not mens interſt to be wicked. It is for the general good of humane Society, and conſequently of particular perſons, to be *true* and *juſt*; it is for mens health to be *temperate*; and ſo I could inſtance in all other vertues. But this is the myſtery of atheiſm, men are wedded to their luſts, and reſolv'd upon a wicked courſe; and ſo it becomes their intereſt to wiſh there were no God, and to believe ſo if they can. Whereas if men were minded to live righteouſly and ſoberly and vertuouſly in the world, *to believe a God* would be no hinderance or prejudice to any ſuch deſign; but very much for the advancement and furtherance of it. Men that are *good* and *vertuous* do eaſily believe a God; ſo that it is vehemently to be ſuſpected, that nothing but the ſtrength of mens luſts and the power of vicious inclinations, do ſway their minds and ſet a *byaſs* upon their underſtandings towards atheiſm.

2. Atheiſm is *imprudent*, becauſe *it is unſafe in the iſſue*. The atheiſt contends againſt the religious man that there is no God; but upon ſtrange inequality and odds, for *he* ventures his eternal intereſt;

whereas the Religious man ventures only the loſs of his Luſts, (which is much better for him to be without) or at the utmoſt, of ſome temporal convenience; and all this while, is inwardly more contented and happy, and uſually more healthful, and perhaps meets with more reſpect, and faithfuller friends, and lives in a more ſecure and flouriſhing condition, and more free from the evils and puniſhments of this world, than the atheſtical perſon does; however, it is not much that he ventures: And after this life, if there be no God, is as well as he; but if there be a God, is infinitely better, even as much as unſpeakable and eternal happineſs is better than extream and endleſs miſery. So that if the arguments, *for* and *againſt* a God, were equal; and it were an *even queſtion* whether there were one or not; yet the hazard and danger is ſo infinitely unequal, that in point of prudence and intereſt every man were obliged to incline to the affirmative: And whatever doubts he might have about it, to chuſe the ſafeſt ſide of the queſtion, and to make *that* the *principle* to live by. For, he that acts wiſely, and is a throughly prudent man, will be provided againſt all events, and will take care to ſecure the *main chance*, what ever happens: but the atheiſt, in caſe things ſhould fall out contrary

trary to his belief and expectation, he hath made no proviſion for this caſe. If, contrary to his confidence, it ſhould prove in the iſſue that there is a God, the *man* is loſt and undon for ever. If the atheiſt when he dyes, ſhould find that his ſoul remains after his body, and has onely quitted its lodging, how will this man be amazed and blank'd, when contrary to his expectation, he ſhall find himſelf in a new and ſtrange place, amidſt a world of ſpirits, entred upon an everlaſting and unchangeable ſtate? How ſadly will this *man* be diſappointed, when he finds all things otherwiſe than he had ſtated and determined them in this world? When he comes to appear before that God whom he had denied and againſt whom he hath ſpoken as deſpightful things as he could; who can imagine the pale and guilty looks of this man, and how he will ſhiver and tremble *for the feare of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majeſty*? How will he be ſurpriſed with terrors on every ſide, to find himſelf thus unexpectedly and irrecoverably plunged into a ſtate of ruin and deſperation? And thus things may happen for all this man's confidence now. For our belief or diſ-belief of a thing does not alter the nature of the thing. We cannot fancy things into being, or make them vaniſh into

to nothing by the ſtubborn confidence of our imaginations. Things are as ſullen as we are, and will be what they are, whatever we think of them. And if there be a God, a man cannot by an obſtinate diſbelief of him make him ceaſe to be, any more than a man can put out the Sun by winking.

And thus I have as briefly and clearly as I could, endeavoured to ſhew the *ignorance* and *folly* of *ſpeculative Atheiſm* in denying the *exiſtence of God*. And now it will be leſs needful to ſpeak of the other *two Principles* of Religion, the *immortality of the ſoul*, and *future rewards*. For no man can have any reaſonable ſcruple about *theſe*, who believes that there is a God. Becauſe no man that owns the *exiſtence* of an *infinite ſpirit*, can doubt of the *poſſibility* of a *finite ſpirit*, that is, ſuch a thing as is *immaterial*, and does not contain any principle of *corruption* in it ſelf. And there is no man that believes the goodneſs of God, but muſt be inclin'd to think, that he hath made ſome things for as long a duration as they are capable of. Nor can any man, that acknowledgeth the *holy* and *juſt* providence of God, and that he loves righteouſneſs, and hates iniquity, and that he is *Magiſtrate* and *Governour* of the World, and conſequently concerned

cerned to countenance the obedience, and to puniſh the violation of his Laws; and that does withall conſider the promiſcuous diſpenſations many times of Gods Providence in this world, I ſay, no man that acknowledges all this, can think it unreaſonable to conclude, that after this life good men ſhall be rewarded, and ſinners puniſhed I have done with the *firſt* ſort of irreligious perſons, *viz.* the *ſpeculative Atheiſt*. I ſhall ſpeak but briefly of the other.

Secondly, The *practical Atheiſt*, who is wicked and irreligious, notwithſtanding he does in ſome ſort believe that there is a God, and a future ſtate; he is likewiſe guilty of prodigious folly. The *principle* of the *ſpeculative atheiſt* argues more *ignorance*, but the *practice* of the *other* argues greater *folly*. Not to believe a God, and another life, for which there is ſo much evidence of Reaſon, is great ignorance and folly; but 'tis the higheſt madneſs, when a man does believe theſe things, to live as if he did not believe them: When a man does not doubt but that there is a God, and that according as he demeans himſelf towards him, he will make him happy or miſerable for ever; yet to live ſo as if he were certain of the contrary, and as no man in reaſon can

live, but he that is well assured that there is no God. It was a shrewd saying of the old *Monk*, That two kind of Prisons would serve for all offenders in the world, an *Inquisition* and a *Bedlam*: If any man should deny the being of a God, and the immortality of the soul, such a one should be put into the first of these, the *Inquisition*, as being a desperate *Heretick*; but if any man should profess to believe these things, and yet allow himself in any known wickedness, such a one should be put into *Bedlam*; because there cannot be a greater *folly* and madness, than for a man in matters of greatest moment and concernment to act against his best reason and understanding, and by his *life* to contradict his *belief*. Such a man does Perish with his eyes open, and knowingly undoes himself; he runs upon the greatest dangers which he clearly sees to be before him, and precipitates himself into those evils which he professes to believe to be real and intolerable; and willfully neglects the obtaining of that unspeakable good and happiness which he is perswaded is certain and attainable. Thus much for the *second way of confirmation*.

III. The *third way of confirmation* shall be, by endeavouring to vindicate Religion from those common *imputations*

Which

which ſeem to charge it with *ignorance* or *imprudence*. And they are chiefly theſe three:

1, *Credulity.*
2. *Singularity.*
3. *Making a fooliſh Bargain.*

Firſt, Credulity: Say they, the foundation of Religion is the belief of thoſe things for which we have no ſufficient reaſon, and conſequently, of which we can have no good aſſurance; as the belief of *a God*, and of *a future ſtate* after this life; things which we never ſaw, nor did experience, nor ever ſpoke with any body that did. Now it ſeems to argue too great a forwardnſs and eaſineſs of belief, to aſſent to any thing upon inſufficient grounds.

To this I anſwer,

1. That if there be ſuch a Being as a God, and ſuch a thing as a future ſtate after this life, it cannot (as I ſaid before) in reaſon be expected that we ſhould have the evidence of ſenſe for ſuch things: For, he that believes a God, believes ſuch a Being as hath all perfections, among which this is one, that he is a ſpirit; and conſequently that he is inviſible, and cannot be ſeen. He likewiſe that believes another life after this, profeſſeth to believe a ſtate

ſtate of which in this life we have no trial and experience. Beſides, if this were a good objection, that no man ever ſaw theſe things, it ſtrikes at the Atheiſt as well as us. For no man ever ſaw the World to be from Eternity; nor *Epicurus* his *Atoms*, of which notwithſtanding he believes the World was made.

2. We have the beſt evidence for theſe things which they are capable of at preſent, ſuppoſing they were.

3. Thoſe who deny theſe *principles*, muſt be much more *credulous*, (that is) believe things upon incomparably leſs evidence of reaſon. The *Atheiſt* looks upon all that are religious as a company of credulous fools. But *he*, for his part, pretends to be wiſer than to believe any thing for company; he cannot entertain things upon thoſe ſlight grounds which move other men; if you would win his aſſent to any thing, you muſt give him a clear demonſtration for it. Now there's no way to deal with this *man of reaſon*, this rigid Exactor of ſtrict demonſtration for things which are not capable of it, but by ſhewing him that he is an hundred times more credulous, that he begs more principles, takes more things for granted without offering to prove them, and aſſents to more ſtrange concluſions upon weaker

weaker grounds, than thoſe whom he ſo much accuſeth of *credulity*.

And to evidence this, I ſhall briefly give you an account of the Atheiſt's *Creed*, and preſent you with a Catalogue of the *fundamental Articles* of his Faith. *He believes* that there is no God, nor poſſibly can be, and conſequently that the *wiſe* as well as *unwiſe* of all ages have been miſtaken, except himſelf and a few more. *He* believes, that either all the World have been frighted with an *apparition* of their own fancy, or that they have moſt unnaturally conſpired together to cozen themſelves; or that this notion of a God is a *trick* of *policy*, though the greateſt *Princes* and *Politicians* do not at this day know ſo much, nor have done time out of mind. *He* believes, either that the Heavens and the Earth and all things in them had no Original cauſe of their being, or elſe that they were made by chance, and happened he knows not how, to be as they are; and that in this laſt ſhuffling of matter, all things have by great good fortune fallen out as happily, and as regularly, as if the greateſt wiſdom had contrived them; but yet he is reſolv'd to believe that there was no wiſdom in the contrivance of them. He believes, that *matter* of it ſelf is utterly void of all *ſenſe*, *underſtanding*,

derſtanding, and *liberty*; but for all that he is of opinion, that the parts of matter may know and then happen to be ſo conveniently diſpos'd, as to have all theſe qualities, and moſt dextrouſly to perform all thoſe *fine* and *free operations* which the ignorant attribute to Spirits.

This is the ſum of his belief. And ſeriouſly it is a wonder, that there ſhould be found any perſon pretending to *reaſon* or *wit*, that can aſſent to ſuch a heap of abſurdities, which are ſo groſs and palpable that they may be felt. So that if every man had his due, it will certainly fall to the atheiſt's ſhare to be the moſt credulous perſon; that is, to believe things upon the ſlighteſt reaſons. For he does not pretend to prove any thing of all this; only he finds himſelf, he knows not why, enclin'd to believe ſo, and to laugh at thoſe that do not.

II. The *ſecond imputation* is *ſingularity*; the affectation whereof is unbecoming a wiſe man. To this charge I anſwer.

I. If by *Religion* be meant the *belief* of the *principles* of Religion, that there is *a God*, and a *providence*, that *our ſouls are immortal*, and that there *are rewards* to be expected after this life; theſe are ſo far from being *ſingular* opinions, that they are and always have been the

general

general opinion of mankind, even of the moſt *barbarous* Nations. Inſomuch, that the Hiſtories of ancient times, do hardly furniſh us with the names of above five or ſix perſons, who denied a God. And *Lucretius* acknowledgeth, that *Epicurus* was the firſt who did oppoſe thoſe great *foundations* of Religion, the *providence* of God, and the *immortality* of the ſoul. *Primum Grajus homo*, &c, meaning *Epicurus*.

2. If by *Religion* be meant a *living up* to thoſe *principles*, (that is) to act conformably to our beſt reaſon and underſtanding, and to *live* as it does become thoſe who do *believe* a God, and a future ſtate; this is acknowledged, even by thoſe who live otherwiſe, to be the part of every wiſe man; and the contrary to be the very *madneſs of folly*, and height of diſtraction: Nothing being more ordinary, than for men who live wickedly, to acknowledg that they ought to do otherwiſe.

3. Though according to the common courſe and practice of the world it be ſomewhat *ſingular*, for men *truly* and *throughly* to *live up* to the *principles* of their *Religion*; yet *ſingularity* in this matter is ſo far from being a *reflection* upon any man's prudence, that it is a *ſingular*

commendation of It. In two caſes *ſingularity* is very commendable.

1. When there is a neceſſity of it in order to a man's greateſt *intereſt* and *happineſs*. I think it to be a reaſonable account for any man to give, why he does not *live* as the greateſt part of the World do, that he has no mind to *dye* as they do, and to periſh with them; he is not diſpoſed to be a fool, and to be miſerable for company; he has no inclination to have his laſt end like theirs *who know not God, and obey not the Goſpel of his Son, and ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

2. It is very commendable, to be *ſingular* in any *excellency*; and I have ſhewn that *Religion* is the greateſt *excellency*: to be *ſingular* in any thing that is *wiſe*, and *worthy*, and *excellent*, is not a *diſparagement*, but a *praiſe*: every man would chuſe to be thus *ſingular*.

III. The *third imputation* is, that *Religion* is *a fooliſh bargain*; becauſe they who are *religious* hazard the parting with a *preſent* and *certain happineſs*, for that which is *future* and *uncertain*. To this I *anſwer*.

1. Let it be granted, that the *aſſurance* which we have of future rewards falls ſhort

ſhort of the *evidence* of *ſenſe*. For I doubt not, but that *that ſaying* of our *Saviour*, *Bleſſed is he who hath believed, & not ſeen*; and thoſe *expreſſions* of the *Apoſtle*, *We walk by faith and not by ſight*; *and faith is the evidence of things not ſeen*; are intended by way of *abatement* and *diminution* to the *evidence* of *Faith*; and do ſignifie, that the *report* and *teſtimony* of *others*, is not ſo great *evidence* as that of *our own ſenſes*: And though we have ſufficient aſſurance of another ſtate, yet no man can think we have ſo great evidence, as if we our ſelves had been in the other world, and ſeen how all things are there.

2. We have *ſufficient aſſurance* of theſe things, and ſuch as may beget in us a well grounded confidence, and free us from all doubts of the contrary; and perſwade a reaſonable man to venture his greateſt *intereſts* in *this world* upon the ſecurity that he hath of *another*: For

1. We have as much *aſſurance* of theſe things, as things *future* and at a diſtance are capable of; and he is a very unreaſonable man that would deſire more: *Future* and *inviſible* things are not capable of the *evidence* of *ſenſe*; but we have the greateſt, *rational evidence* for them; and in this every reaſonable man ought to reſt ſatisfi'd.

2. We have as much as is *abundantly sufficient* to justifie every mans discretion, who for the *great* and *eternal* things of *another world*, hazards or parts with the *poor* and transitory things of *this life*. And for the clearing of this, it will be worth our considering, that the greatest affairs of this world, and the most important concernments of this life, are all conducted only by *moral demonstrations*. Men every day venture their *lives* and *estates only* upon *moral* assurance. *For instance*, men who never were at the *east* or *west Indies*, or in *Turky*, or *Spain*; yet do venture their whole estates in Traffick thither, though they have no *Mathematical demonstration*, only *moral assurance* that there are such *places*. Nay which is more, Men every day *eat* and *drink*, though I think no man can demonstrate out of *Euclide* or *Appolonius*, that his *Baker*, or *Brewer*, or *Cook*, have not conveyed *poyson* into his *meat*, or *drink*. And that man that would be so *wise* and *cautious*, as not to eat or drink till he could *demonstrate* this to himself, I know no other remedy for him, but that in great gravity and wisdom he must dye for fear of death. And for any man to urge, that though men in temporal affairs proceed upon moral assurance, yet there is greater assurance required

required to make men ſeek Heaven and avoid Hell, ſeems to me to be highly unreaſonable. For ſuch an aſſurance of things as will make men circumſpect and careful to avoid a leſſer danger, ought in all reaſon to awaken men much more to the avoiding of a greater: ſuch an aſſurance as will ſharpen mens deſires, and quicken their endeavours for the obtaining of a leſſer good, ought in all reaſon to animate men more powerfully, and to inſpire them with a greater vigour and induſtry, in the purſuit of that which is infinitely greater. For why the ſame aſſurance ſhould not operate as well in a great danger as in a leſs, in a great good as in a ſmall and inconſiderable one, I can ſee no reaſon; unleſs men will ſay, that the greatneſs of an evil and danger is an encouragement to men to run upon it, and that the greatneſs of any good and happineſs ought in reaſon to diſhearten men from the purſuit of it.

And now I think I may with reaſon entreat ſuch as are atheiſtically enclined, to conſider theſe things *ſeriouſly* and *impartially*; And if there be weight in theſe *conſiderations* which I have offered to them, to ſway with reaſonable men, I would beg of ſuch, that they would not ſuffer themſelves to be byaſſed by *prejudice*

or *paſſion*, or the *intereſt* of any *luſt* or *worldly advantage*, to a contrary perſwaſion.

Firſt, I would entreat them, *ſeriouſly* and *diligently* to conſider theſe things; becauſe they are of ſo great moment and concernment to every man: If any thing in the world deſerve our ſerious ſtudy and conſideration, theſe *principles* of Religion do. For what can import us more to be ſatisfied in, than *whether there be a God, or not? whether our ſouls ſhall periſh with our bodies; or be immortal, and ſhall continue for ever?* And if ſo, *whether in that eternal ſtate which remains for men after this life, they ſhall not be happy or miſerable for ever, according as they have demeaned themſelves in this world?*

If theſe things be ſo, they are of infinite conſequence to us; and therefore it highly concernes us to enquire diligently about them, and to ſatisfie our minds concerning them one way or other. For theſe are not matters to be ſlightly and ſuperficially thought upon, much leſs (as the way of atheiſtical men is) to be *played* and *jeſted* withall. There is no greater argument of a *light* and *inconſiderate* perſon, than *profanely to ſcoff at Religion*. It is a ſign that *that man* hath no regard to himſelf, and that *he* is not touched with a

ſenſe

ſenſe of his own intereſt, who loves to be jeſting with *edg'd tools*, and to *play with life* and *death*. This is the very mad-man that *Solomon* ſpeakes of, *who caſteth fire-brands, arrows and death, and ſaith, am I not in ſport*? To examine ſeverely, and debate ſeriouſly the *principles* of Religion, is a thing worthy of a wiſe man, but i any man ſhall turn *Religion* into *raillery*, and think to confute it by two or three *bold jeſts*, this man doth not render *Religion* but *himſelf* ridiculous, in the opinion of all conſiderate men; becauſe he *ſports with his own life*. If the *principles* of *Religion* were *doubtful and uncertain*, yet they concern us ſo nearly, that we ought to be ſerious in the examination of them. And though *they* were never ſo *clear* and *evident*, yet they may be made *ridiculous* by *vain and frothy* men; as the graveſt and wiſeſt perſon in the world may be abuſed, by being put into a *fools coat*; and the moſt *noble* and *excellent Poem* may be debaſed and made vile, by being turned into *burleſque*. But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more largely in my next *diſcourſe*. Prov. 26. 18.

So that it concerns every man, that would not *triſle* away his *ſoul* and fool himſelf into irrecoverable miſery, with the greateſt ſeriouſneſs to enquire into *theſe matters*

whether they be ſo or not, and patiently to conſider the arguments which are brought for them. For many have miſcarrried about theſe things, not becauſe there is not *reaſon* and *evidence* enough for them, but becauſe they have not had *patience* enough to conſider them.

Secondly, conſider theſe things *impartially*. All *wicked men* are of a *party* againſt *Religion*. Some *luſt* or *intereſt* engageth them againſt it. Hence it comes to paſs that they are apt to *ſlight* the *ſtrongeſt* arguments that can be brought for it, and to *cry up* very *weak* ones againſt it. Men do generally, and without difficulty, aſſent to *Mathematical truths*, becauſe it is no bodies intereſt to deny them; but men are ſlow to believe *moral* and *divine* Truths, becauſe by their *luſts* and *intereſt* they are prejudiced againſt them. And therefore you may obſerve, that the more vertuouſly any man lives, and the leſs he is enſlaved to any luſt, the more ready he is to entertain the principles of Religion.

Therefore, when you are examining theſe matters, do not take into conſideration any *ſenſual* or *worldly* intereſt, but deal clearly and impartially with your ſelves. Let not *temporal* and *little advantages* ſway you againſt a *greater* and more

durable

durable intereſt. Think thus with your ſelves; that you have not the *making* of things *true* or *falſe*, but that the truth and exiſtence of things is already fix'd and ſetled, and that the principles of Religion are already either determinately true or falſe, before you think of them: either there is a God, or there is not; either your Souls are Immortal, or they are not; one of theſe is certain and neceſſary, and they are not now to be altered; The truth of things will not comply with our conceits, and bend it ſelf to our intereſts. Therefore do not think what you would have to be, but conſider impartially what is, and (if it be) will be, whether you will or no. Do not reaſon thus; I would fain be wicked, and therefore it is my intereſt that there ſhould be no God, nor no life after this; and therefore I will endeavour to prove that there is no ſuch thing, and will ſhew all the favour I can to that *ſide* of the *queſtion*; I will bend my underſtanding and wit to ſtrengthen the negative, and will ſtudy to make it as true as I can. This is fond, becauſe it is the way to cheat thy ſelf; and that we may do as often as we pleaſe, *but the nature of things will not be impoſed upon.* If then thou be as wiſe as thou oughteſt to be, thou wilt reaſon thus with thy

thy ſelf; My higheſt intereſt is *not to be deceived* about theſe matters, therefore ſetting aſide all other conſiderations, I will endeavour to know the truth, and yield to that.

And now it is time to draw towards a concluſion of this long diſcourſe. And that which I have all this while been endeavoring to convince men of, and to perſwade them to, is no other but what God himſelf doth particularly recommend to us, as proper for *humane* conſideration, *unto Man he ſaid, behold the fear of the Lord that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* Whoever pretends to reaſon, and calls himſelf a *man*, is oblig'd to acknowledg God and to demean himſelf religiouſly towards him. For God is to the underſtanding of man, as the light of the Sun is to our eyes, the firſt, and the plaineſt, and the moſt glorious object of it. He fills heaven and earth, and every thing in them does repreſent him to us. Which way ſoever we turn our ſelves, we are encountred with clear evidences and ſenſible demonſtrations of a Deity.

Rom. 1. 20 For (as the *Apoſtle* reaſons) *The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead*: εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐ-

τὰς

τὸς ἀναπολογήτους, *ſo that they are without excuſe*; that is, thoſe men that know not God, have no apology to make for themſelves. Or if men do know and believe, that there is ſuch a being as God; not to conſider the proper conſequences of ſuch a principle, not to demean our ſelves towards him as becomes our relation to him, and dependance upon him, and the duty which we naturally owe him, this is great ſtupidity and inconſiderateneſs.

And yet he that conſiders the lives and actions of the greateſt part of men, would verily think that they underſtood nothing of all this. Therefore the *Scripture* repreſents wicked men as without underſtanding, *It is a Nation void of counſel, neither is there any underſtanding in them*: and elſewhere, *have all the workers of iniquity no knowledg*; Not that they are deſtitute of the natural faculty of underſtanding, but they do not uſe it as they ought; they are not blind, but they wink; *they detain the truth of God in unrighteouſneſs*; and *though they know God, yet they do not glorifie him as God*, nor ſuffer the apprehenſions of him to have a due influence upon their hearts and lives. Deut. 32. 28. Pſal. 14. 4.

Men generally ſtand very much upon the credit and reputation of their underſtandings, and of all things in the world hate

hate to be accounted fools, becauſe it is ſo great a reproach. The beſt way to avoid this imputation, and to bring off the credit of our underſtandings, is to be truly religious, *to fear the Lord, and to depart from evil.* For certainly, there is no ſuch imprudent perſon, as he that neglects God and his ſoul, and is careleſs and ſlothful about his everlaſting concernments; becauſe this man acts contrary to his trueſt reaſon and beſt intereſt; he neglects his own ſafety, and is active to procure his own ruin; he flies from happineſs, and runs away from it as faſt as he can, but purſues miſery, and makes haſt to be undone. Hence it is that *Solomon* does all along in the *Proverbs* give the title of *fool* to a wicked man, as if it were his proper name, and the fitteſt character of him, becauſe he is ſo eminently ſuch: There is no fool to the ſinner, who every moment ventures his ſoul, and lays his everlaſting intereſt at the ſtake. Every time a man provokes God, he does the greateſt miſchief to himſelf that can be imagined. A mad man that cuts himſelf, and tears his own fleſh, and daſhes his head againſt the ſtones, does not act ſo unreaſonably as he; becauſe he is not ſo ſenſible of what he does. Wickedneſs is a kind of *voluntary* frenzy, and a *choſen* diſtraction, and every ſinner does

does wilder and more extravagant things, than any man can do that is craz'd and out of his wits; only with this ſad difference, that he knows better what he does. For to them who believe another life after this, an eternal ſtate of happineſs or miſery in another world, (which is but a reaſonable *poſtulatum* or demand among *Chriſtians*) there is nothing in *Mathematicks* more demonſtrable than the folly of wicked men; for it is not a clearer and more evident principle, *that the whole is greater than a part*, than that *eternity* and the concernments of it are are to be preferred before *time*.

I will therefore put the matter into a *temporal Caſe*, that wicked men, who underſtand any thing of the rules and principles of worldly wiſdom, may ſee the imprudence of an irreligious and ſinful courſe, and be convinced *that this their way is their folly, even themſelves being judges*.

Is that man *wiſe*, as to his *body* and his *health*, who only cloths his hands, but leaves his whole body naked? who provides only againſt the tooth-ach, and neglects whole troops of mortal diſeaſes that are ready to ruſh in upon him? Juſt thus does he, who takes care only for this vile body, but neglects his precious and immortal

mortal ſoul; who is very ſolicitous to prevent ſmall and temporal inconveniences, but takes no care to *eſcape the damnation of hell.*

Is he a prudent man, as to his temporal *eſtate*, that lays deſigns only for a day, without any proſpect to, or proviſion for, the remaining part of his life? Even ſo does he, that provides for the *ſhort time* of this life, but takes no care for all *Eternity*; which is *to be wiſe for a moment, but a fool for ever*, and to act as untowardly and as croſly to the reaſon of things as can be imagined, to regard *Time* as if it were *Eternity*, and to neglect *Eternity* as if it were but a *ſhort time.*

Do we count him a wiſe man, who is wiſe in any thing but in his own proper *profeſſion* and employment, wiſe for every body but himſelf; who is ingenious to contrive his own miſery, and to do himſelf a miſchief: but is dull and ſtupid as to the deſigning of any real benefit and advantage to himſelf? Such a one is he, who is ingenious in his calling, but a bad Chriſtian; for *Chriſtianity* is more our proper *calling* and profeſſion than the very *trades* we live upon: and ſuch is every ſinner, who is *wiſe to do evil, but to do good hath no underſtanding.*

Is it wiſdom in any man to neglect and diſoblige him who is his beſt *friend*, and can be

be his ſoreſt *enemy*? or with one weak troop to go out to meat him that comes againſt him with *thouſands of thouſands*? to flie a ſmall danger, and run upon a greater? Thus does every wicked man that neglects and contemns God, *who can ſave or deſtroy him*; who ſtrives with his *Maker*, and *provoketh the Lord to jealouſie*; and with the ſmall and inconſiderable *forces of a man*, takes the field againſt the *mighty God, the Lord of Hoſts*; who *fears them that can kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but fears not him, who after he hath kill'd, can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell*; and thus does he who for fear of any thing in this World ventures to diſpleaſe God; for in ſo doing he runs away from *men*, and *falls into the hands of the living God*; he flies from a *temporal danger*, and leaps into *Hell*.

Is not he an imprudent man, who in matters of greateſt moment and concernment, neglects oportunities never to be retreiv'd? who ſtanding upon the ſhore, and ſeeing the *tide* making haſt towards him apace, and that he hath but a few minutes to ſave himſelf, yet will lay himſelf to ſleep there, till the *cruel ſea* ruſh in upon him, and overwhelm him? And is he any better, who trifles away this day of God grace and patience; and fooliſhly adjourns the neceſſary work of repen-

repentance, and the weighty buſineſs of Religion, to a dying hour.

And, to put an end to theſe queſtions, Is he wiſe, who hopes to attain the End without the means; nay, by means that are quite contrary to it? ſuch is every wicked man, who hopes to be *bleſſed* hereafter without being *holy* here; to gain the favour of God by offending him; and to come to the bliſsful ſight of him by ſinning againſt him; and to be *happy* (that is) to find a pleaſure in the enjoyment of God, and in the company of holy ſpirits, by rendring himſelf as unſuitable and unlike to them as he can.

Wouldſt thou then be truly wiſe? Be wiſe for thy *ſelf*, wiſe for thy *ſoul*, wiſe for *eternity*. Reſolve upon a religious courſe of life. *Fear God and depart from evil.* Look beyond things preſent and ſenſible, unto things which are not ſeen, and are eternal, Labour to ſecure the great intereſts of another world, and refer all the actions of this ſhort and dying life, to that ſtate which will ſhortly begin, but never have an end: and this will approve it ſelf to be *wiſdom* at the laſt, whatever the world judg of it now. For, not that which is approved of men *now*, but what ſhall *finally* be approved by God, is true wiſdom; that which

which is esteemed so by *him*, who is the fountain and original of all wisdom, the first rule and measure, the best and most competent judg of it.

I deny not but that those that are wicked, and neglect Religion, may think themselves wise, and may enjoy this their delusion for a while. But there is a time a coming, when the most profane and atheistical, who now account it a piece of gallantry, and an argument of a great spirit, and of a more than common wit and understanding, to slight God, and to baffle Religion, and to level all the discourses of another world, with the Poetical descriptions of the Fairy-land: I say, there is a day a coming, when all these witty fools shall be unhappily undeceived, and not being able to enjoy their delusion any longer shall call themselves fools for ever.

But why should I use so much importunity to perswade men to that which is so excellent, so useful, and so necessary? The thing it self hath allurements in it beyond all arguments: For, if Religion be the best knowledg and wisdom, I cannot offer any thing beyond this to your understandings to raise your esteem of it; I can present nothing beyond this to your affections to excite your love and desire. All

that can be done, is to ſet the thing before men, and to offer it to their choice; and if mens natural deſire of wiſdom, and knowledg, and happineſs, will not perſwade them to be religious, 'tis in vain to uſe arguments: if the ſight of theſe beauties will not charm mens affections, 'tis to no purpoſe to go about to compel a liking, and to urge and puſh forward a match to the making whereof conſent is neceſſary. Religion is matter of our freeſt choice, and if men will obſtinately and wilfully ſet themſelves againſt it, there is no remedy. *Pertinaciæ nullum remedium poſuit Deus*, God has provided no remedy for the obſtinacy of men; but if they will chuſe to be fools, and to be miſerable, he will leave them to inherit their own choice, and to enjoy the portion of ſinners.

2 PET. iii. 3.

Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts.

KNowing *this firſt.* In the *verſe* before, the *Apoſtle* was ſpeaking of a famous *prophecy*, before the accompliſhment of which, this ſort of men whom he calls *ſcoffers*, ſhould come. *That ye may be mindful of the words which were ſpoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour; Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt dayes ſcoffers*, &c.

The *prophecy* here ſpoken of, is probably that famous prediction of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, which is in the Prophet *Daniel*; and before the fulfilling whereof,

Math. 24. 11. our Saviour expreſly tells us, *falſe prophets ſhould ariſe, and deceive many.*

Now the *ſcoffers* here ſpoken of, are the *falſe teachers* whom the *Apoſtle* had been deſcribing all along in the foregoing *Chapter*; *there were falſe prophets alſo among the people, even as there ſhall be falſe teachers among you.* Theſe, he tells us, ſhould proceed to that height of impiety, as to ſcoff at the principles of Religion, and to deride the expectations of a future judgment, *In the laſt days ſhall come ſcoffers walking after their own luſts, and ſaying, where is the promiſe of his coming?*

In ſpeaking to theſe words, I ſhall do theſe three things.

1. Conſider the nature of the ſin here mentioned, which is *ſcoffing* at Religion.

2. The character of the perſons that are charg'd with the guilt of this ſin, they are ſaid *to walk after their own luſts.*

3. I ſhall repteſent to you the hainouſneſs, and the aggravations of this vice.

I. *Firſt*, we will conſider the nature of the ſin here mentioned, which is *ſcoffing* at Religion, *There ſhall come ſcoffers*, Theſe, it ſeems, were a ſort of people that deri-

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ded our Saviour's prediction, of his coming to judg the world. So the Apoſtle tells us in the next words, that they ſaid, *where is the promiſe of his coming?*

In thoſe times, there was a common perſwaſion among Chriſtians, *that the day of the Lord was at hand*, as the *Apoſtle* elſewhere tells us. Now this, 'tis propable, theſe *ſcoffers* twitted the Chriſtians withal; and becauſe Chriſt did not come when ſome looked for him, they concluded he would not come at all. Upon this they derided the Chriſtians, as enduring perſecution in a vain expectation of that which was never likely to happen. They ſaw all things continue *as they were from the beginning of the world*, notwithſtanding the apprehenſions of Chriſtians concerning the approaching end of it; *For ſince the fathers fell aſleep all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the world.* *Since the fathers fell aſleep*, ἀφ' ἧς, which may either be rendred from the time, or elſe, (which ſeems more agreeable to the atheiſtical diſcourſe of theſe men) *ſaving*, or *except that the fathers are fallen aſleep, all things continue as they were.* Saving that men dye, and one generation ſucceeds another, they ſaw no change or alteration. They looked upon all things as 2 Theſ. 3. 2.

going on in a conſtant courſe; One generation of men paſſed away, and another came in the room of it, but the world remain'd ſtill as it was. And thus, for ought they knew, things might hold on for ever. So that the principles of theſe men, ſeem to be much the ſame with thoſe of the *Epicureans*, who denied the providence of God, and the immortality of mens ſouls; and conſequently, a future judgment which ſhould ſentence men to rewards and puniſhments in another world. Theſe great and fundamental principles of all Religion, they derided as the fancies and dreams of a company of melancholly men, who were weary of the world, and pleaſed themſelves with vain conceits of happineſs and eaſe in another life. But as for them, they believed none of thoſe things; and therefore gave all manner of licence and indulgence to their luſts.

But this belongs to the ſecond thing I propounded to ſpeak to, namely,

II. The character which is here given of theſe *ſcoffers*; They are ſaid *to walk after their own luſts.* And no wonder, if when they denied a future judgment, they gave up themſelves to all manner of ſenſuality.

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St. *Jude* in his *Epiſtle* gives much the ſame character of them that St. *Peter* here does, ver. 18, 19. *There ſhall come in the laſt days mockers, walking after their own ungodly luſts, ſenſual, not having the ſpirit.* So that we ſee what kind of perſons they are who prophanely ſcoff at Religion, men of ſenſual ſpirits, and of licentious lives. For this character, which the *Apoſtle* here gives of the *ſcoffers* of that age, was not an accidental thing, which happened to thoſe perſons, but is the conſtant character of them who deride Religion, and flows from the very temper and diſpoſition of thoſe who are guilty of this impiety; it is both the uſual preparation to it, and the natural conſequent of it.

To deride God and Religion, is the higheſt kind of impiety. And men do not uſually arrive to this degree of wickedneſs at firſt, but they come to it by ſeveral ſteps. The *Pſalmiſt* very elegantly expreſſeth to us the ſeveral gradations by which men at laſt come to this horrid degree of impiety; *Bleſſed is the man, that walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornful.* Pſal. 1. 1. Men are uſually firſt corrupted by bad counſel and company, which is called, *walking in the*

counſel of the ungodly; next they habituate themſelves to their vicious practices, which is *ſtanding in the way of ſinners*; and then at laſt, they take up and ſettle in a contempt of all Religion, which is called *ſitting in the ſeat of the ſcornful.*

For when men once indulge themſelves in wicked courſes, the vicious inclinations of their minds, ſway their underſtandings, and make them apt to disbelieve thoſe truths which contradict their luſts. Every inordinate luſt and paſſion is a falſe byaſs upon mens underſtandings, which naturally draws toward atheiſm. And when mens judgments are once byaſſed, they do not believe according to the evidence of things, but according to their humour and their intereſt. For when men live as if there were no God, it becomes expedient for them that there ſhould be none: And then they endeavour to perſwade themſelves ſo, and will be glad to find arguments to fortifie themſelves in this perſwaſion. Men of diſſolute lives cry down Religion, becauſe they would not be under the reſtraints of it; they are loth to be tied up by the ſtrict laws and rules of it: 'Tis their intereſt, more than any reaſon they have againſt it, which makes them deſpiſe it; they hate it becauſe they

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are reproved by it. So our Saviour tells us, that *men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.* John 3.19 20.

I remember it is the ſaying of *one*, who hath done more, by his *Writings*, to debauch the Age with Atheiſtical principles, than any man that lives in it, *That when reaſon is againſt a man, then a man will be againſt reaſon.* I am ſure, this is the true account of ſuch mens enmity to Religion; Religion is againſt them, and therefore they ſet themſelves againſt Religion. The principles of Religion, and the doctrines of the *holy Scriptures* are terrible enemies to wicked men; they are continually flying in their faces, and galling their conſciences: And this is that which makes them kick againſt Religion, and ſpurn at the doctrines of that *holy Book*. And this may probably be one reaſon, why many men, who are obſerved to be ſufficiently dull in other matters, yet can talk prophanely, and ſpeak againſt Religion with ſome kind of ſalt and ſmartneſs; Becauſe Religion is the thing that frets them, as in other things, ſo in this *Vexatio dat intellectum*, the inward trou-

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ble and vexation of their minds, gives them ſome kind of wit and ſharpneſs in rallying upon Religion. Their conſciences are galled by it, and this makes them winch and fling as if they had ſome mettal. For, let men pretend what they will, there is no eaſe and comfort of mind to be had from atheiſtical principles. 'Tis found by experience, that none are more apprehenſive of danger, or more fearful of death than this ſort of men: Even when they are in proſperity, they ever and anon feel many inward ſtings and laſhes; but when any great affliction or calamity overtakes them, they are the moſt poor ſpirited creatures in the whole world.

The ſum is, the true reaſon why any man is an atheiſt, is becauſe he is a wicked man. Religion would curb him in his luſts, and therefore he caſts it off, and puts all the ſcorn upon it he can. Beſides, that men think it ſome kind of apology for their vices, that they do not act contrary to any principle they profeſs: Their practice is agreeable to what they pretend to believe; and ſo they think to vindicate themſelves and their own practices, by laughing at thoſe for fools, who believe any thing to the contrary.

III, The

III. The *third* thing I propounded was, to repreſent to you, the hainouſneſs, and the aggravations of this vice. And to make this out, we will make theſe three ſuppoſitions, which are as many as the thing will bear.

1. Suppoſe there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were falſe.

2. Suppoſe the matter were doubtful, and the arguments equal on both ſides.

3. Suppoſe it certain, that there is a God, and that the principles of Religion are true. Put the caſe how we will: I ſhall ſhow that this humour is intolerable.

1. Suppoſe there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were falſe. Not that there is any reaſon for ſuch a ſuppoſition, but only to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this humour; Put the caſe, that theſe men were in the right, in denying the principles of Religion, and that all that they pretend were true; yet ſo long as the generality of mankind believes the contrary, it is certainly a great rudeneſs and incivility at leaſt, to deride and ſcoff at theſe things. Indeed upon this ſuppoſition, there could be no ſuch thing as ſin; but yet it would be a great offence againſt

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the laws of civil converſation. Suppoſe then, the Atheiſt were wiſer than all the world, and that he did upon good grounds know that all mankind, beſides himſelf and two or three more, were miſtaken about the matters of Religion; yet if he were either ſo wiſe, or ſo civil as he ſhould be, he would keep all this to himſelf, and not affront other men about theſe things.

I remember that that *Law* which God gave to the people of *Iſrael*, *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the Rulers of thy people*; is rendred by *Joſephus* in a very different ſenſe: *What other Nations account Gods, let no man blaſpheme.* And this is not ſo different from the *Hebrew*, as at firſt ſight one would imagine; for the ſame *Hebrew* word ſignifies both *Gods* and *Rulers*. But whether this be the meaning of that *Law* or not, there is a great deal of reaſon in the thing. For though every man have a right to diſpute againſt a falſe Religion, yet it is a barbarous incivility for any man, ſcurrilouſly to make ſport with that which others account Religion.

But now the Atheiſt can pretend no obligation of conſcience, why he ſhould ſo much as diſpute againſt the principles of Religion, much leſs deride them. He that pre-

pretends to any Religion, may pretend conſcience for oppoſing a contrary Religion. But he that denies all Religion, can pretend no conſcience for any thing. A man may be obliged indeed in reaſon and common humanity, to free his neighbour from a hurtful error; but ſuppoſing there were no God, this notion of a Deity, and the Principles of Religion, have taken ſuch deep root in the mind of man, that either they are not to be extinguiſhed, or if they be, it would be no kindneſs to any man to endeavour it for him; becauſe it is not to be done, but with ſo much trouble and violence, that the remedy would be worſe than the diſeaſe.

For if this notion of a Deity be founded in a natural fear, it is in vain to attempt to expel it; for whatever violence may be offer'd to nature by endeavouring to reaſon men into a contrary perſwaſion, nature will ſtill recoil and at laſt return to it ſelf; and then the fear will be augmented, from the apprehenſion of the dangerous conſequences of ſuch an impiety. So that nothing can create more trouble to a man, than to endeavour to diſpoſſeſs him of this conceit; becauſe nature is but irritated by the conteſt, and the man's fears will be doubled upon him.

But

But if we ſuppoſe this apprehenſion of a Deity to have no foundation in nature, but to have had its riſe from tradition, which hath been confirmed in the world by the prejudice of education; the difficulty of removing it will almoſt be as great as if it were natural, that which men take in by education being next to that which is natural. And if it could be extinguiſh't, yet the advantage of it will not recompence the trouble of the cure, For, except the avoiding of perſecution for Religion, there is no advantage that the principles of atheiſm if they could be quietly ſetled in a man's mind, can give him. The advantage indeed that men make of them, is to give themſelves the liberty to do what they pleaſe, to be more ſenſual and more unjuſt than other men; that is, they have the priviledg to ſurfeit themſelves, and to be ſick oftner than other men: and to make mankind their enemy by their unjuſt and diſhoneſt actions; and conſequently, to live more uneaſily in the world than other men.

So that the principles of Religion, the *belief of a God*, and *another life*, by obliging men to be vertuous, do really promote their temporal happineſs. And all the priviledg that atheiſm pretends to, is

to let men loose to vice, which is naturally attended with temporal inconveniences. And if this be true, then the atheist cannot pretend this Reason of charity to mankind (which is the only one I can think of) to dispute against Religion, much less to rally upon it. For it is plain, that it would be no kindness to any man, to be undeceived in these principles of Religion, supposing they were false. Because the principles of Religion are so far from hindring, that they promote a mans happiness even in this world; and as to the other world, there can be no inconvenience in the mistake: for when a man is not, it will be no trouble to him, that he was once deceived about these matters.

And where no obligation of conscience, nor of reason, can be pretended, there certainly the laws of civility ought to take place. Now men do profess to believe that there is a God, and that the common principles of Religion are true, and to have a great veneration for these things. Can there then be a greater insolence, than for a man, when he comes into company, to rally and fall foul upon those things, for which he knows the company have a reverence? Can one man offer a greater affront to another, than to expose to scorn

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him whom he owns and declares to be his beſt friend, the patron of his life, and the greateſt benefactor he hath in the world? And doth not every man that owns a God, ſay this of him?

But when the generality of Mankind are of the ſame opinion, the rudeneſs is ſtill the greater. So that whoever doth openly contemn God and Religion, he does *Delinquere in majeſtatem populi & humani generis*, he does offend againſt the majeſty of the People, and that reverence which is due to the common apprehenſions of Mankind, whether they be true or not; which is the greateſt incivility that can be imagin'd.

This is the firſt conſideration, and it is the leaſt that I have to urge in this matter. But yet I have inſiſted the longer upon it, becauſe it is ſuch a one as ought eſpecially to prevail upon thoſe whom I am afraid, are too often guilty of this vice, I mean thoſe who are of better breeding; becauſe they pretend to underſtand the laws of behaviour, and the decencies of converſation, better than other men.

2. Suppoſing it were doubtful whether there be a God or not, and whether the Principles of Religion were true or not; and that the Arguments were equal on both

both Sides: yet it would be a great folly to deride these things. And here I suppose as much as the atheist can with any colour of Reason pretend to. For no man ever yet pretended to demonstrate that there is no God, nor no life after this. For these being pure negatives, are capable of no proof, unless a man could shew them to be plainly impossible. The utmost that is pretended is, that the arguments that are brought for these things are not sufficient to convince. But if they were only probable so long as no arguments are produced to the contrary, that cannot in reason be denied to be a great advantage.

But I will for the present suppose the probabilities equal on both sides. And upon this supposition, I doubt not to make it appear, to be a monstrous folly to deride these things. Because, though the arguments on both sides were equal, yet the danger and hazard is infinitely unequal.

If it prove true that there is no God, the religious man may be as happy in this world as the atheist; nay the principles of Religion and virtue do in their own nature tend to make him happier. Because they give satisfaction to his mind, and his conscience by this means is freed

from many fearful girds and twinges which the atheiſt feels. Beſides, that the practice of Religion and virtue doth naturally promote our temporal felicity. It is more for a man's health, and more for his reputation, and more for his advantage in all other worldly reſpects, to lead a vertuous than a vicious courſe of life. And for the other world, if there be no God, the caſe of the religious man and the atheiſt will be alike; becauſe they will both be extinguiſht by death, and inſenſible of any further happineſs or miſery.

But then if the contrary opinion ſhould prove true, that there is a God; and that the ſouls of men are tranſmitted out of this world into the other, there to receive the juſt reward of their actions: Then it is plain to every man, at firſt ſight, that the caſe of the religious man and the atheiſt muſt be vaſtly different: Then, where ſhall the wicked, and the ungodly appear? And what, think we, ſhall be the portion of thoſe who have affronted God, and derided his word, and made a mock of every thing that is ſacred and religious? What can they expect, but to be rejected by him whom they have renounced; and to feel the terrible effects of that power and juſtice which they have deſpiſed?

So

So that though the arguments on both ſides were equal, yet the danger is not ſo. On the one ſide there is none at all, but 'tis infinite on the other. And conſequently, it muſt be a monſtrous folly for any man to make a mock of thoſe things which he knows not whether they be or not; and if they be, of all things in the world they are no jeſting matters.

3. Suppoſe there be a God, and that the principles of Religion are true; then is it not only a hainous impiety, but a perfect madneſs to ſcoff at theſe things. And that there is a God, and that the Principles of Religion are true, I have already in my former *diſcourſe* endeavoured to prove; both from the things which are made, and from the general conſent of mankind in theſe principles; of which univerſal conſent no ſufficient Reaſon can be given, unleſs they were true. And ſuppoſing they are ſo, it is not only the utmoſt pitch of impiety, but the higheſt flight of folly that can be imagined, to deride theſe things. To be diſobedient to the commands of God, is a great contempt; but to deny his *Being*, and to make ſport with his *word*, and to endeavour to render it ridiculous, by turning the wiſe and weighty ſayings of that *holy Book* into raillery, is a moſt

direct affront to the God that is above. Thus the *Psalmist* describes these atheistical persons as levelling their blasphemies immediately against the Majesty of heaven. *They set their mouth against the heavens, & their tongue walketh through the earth*; they do mischief among men, but the affront is immediately to God.

Besides, that this prophane spirit is an argument of a most incorrigible temper. The *Wise man* every where speaks of the *scorner* as one of the worst sort of sinners, and hardest to be reclaimed; because he *despiseth instruction*, and mocks at all the means whereby he should be reformed.

And then, is it not a most black and horrid ingratitude, thus to use the Author of our beings, and the Patron of our lives; to make a scorn of him that made us, and to live in an open defiance of him, *in whom we live, move, and have our beings*? But this is not all. As it is a most hainous, so it is a most dangerous impiety, to despise him that can destroy us, and to oppose him who is infinitely more powerful than we are. *Will ye* (says the Apostle) *provoke the Lord to jealousie? are ye stronger than he?* What *Gamaliel* said to the *Jews*, in another case, may with a little

little change be applied to this ſort of men; If there be a God, and the principles of Religion be true, *ye cannot overthrow them; therefore refrain from ſpeaking againſt theſe* things, *leſt ye be found fighters againſt God.*

I will but add one thing more, to ſhew the folly of this prophane temper. And that is this: That as it is the greateſt of all other ſins, ſo there is in truth the leaſt temptation to it. When the Devil tempts men with riches or honour to ruin themſelves, he offers them ſome kind of conſideration: But the prophane perſon ſerves the Devil for naught, and ſins only for ſin's ſake; ſuffers himſelf to be tempted to the greateſt ſins, and into the greateſt dangers, for no other reward, but the ſlender reputation of ſeeming to ſay that wittily, which no wiſe man would ſay. And what a folly is this? for a man to offend his conſcience to pleaſe his humour; and only for his jeſt, to loſe two of the beſt Friends he hath in the world, God and his own ſoul.

I have done with the *three* things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this Argument, And now I beg your patience, to apply what I have ſaid, to theſe three purpoſes;

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly of prophaneneſs, which by ſome is miſcalled wit.

2. To caution men not to think the worſe of Religion, becauſe ſome are ſo bold as to deſpiſe and to deride it.

3. To perſwade men to employ that reaſon and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purpoſes; in the ſervice, and to the glory of that God, who hath beſtowed theſe gifts on men.

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly. I know not how it comes to paſs, that ſome men have the fortune to be eſteemed Wits, only for jeſting out of the common road; and for making bold to ſcoff at thoſe things, which the greateſt part of mankind reverence. As if a man ſhould be accounted a Wit, for reviling thoſe in Authority; which is no more an argument of any man's wit, than it is of his diſcretion. A wiſe man would not ſpeak contemptuouſly of a great Prince, though he were out of his Dominions; becauſe he remembers, that Kings have long hands, and that their power and influence does many times reach a great way further than their

their direct Authority. But God *is a great King, and in his hands are all the corners of the earth; we can go no whither from his Spirit, nor can we flee from his presence*; where-ever we are, *his eye sees us*, and *his right hand* can reach us. If men did truly consult the interest, either of their safety, or reputation, they would never exercise their wit in dangerous matters. Wit is a very commendable quality, but then a wise man should always have the keeping of it. It is a sharp weapon as apt for mischief as for good purposes, if it be not well manag'd. The proper use of it is, to season conversation; to represent what is praise-worthy, to the greatest advantage; and to expose the vices and follies of men, such things as are in themselves truly ridiculous: But if it be applied to the abuse of the gravest and most serious matters, it then loses its commendation. If any man think he abounds in this quality, and hath wit to spare, there is scope enough for it, within the bounds of Religion and decency; and when it transgresseth these, it degenerates into insolence and impiety. All wit which borders upon prophaneness, and makes bold with those things to which the greatest reverence is due, deserves to be branded for folly,

And if we would preſerve our ſelves from the infection of this vice, we muſt take heed how we ſcoff at Religion, under any form; leſt inſenſibly we derive ſome contempt upon Religion it ſelf. And we muſt likewiſe take heed how we accuſtom our ſelves to a ſlight and irreverent uſe of the Name of God, and of the phraſes and expreſſions of the holy Bible; which ought not to be applied upon every light occaſion. Men will eaſily ſlide into the higheſt degree of prophaneneſs, who are not careful to preſerve a due reverence of the great and glorious Name of God, and an awful regard to the holy Scriptures. None ſo nearly diſpoſed to ſcoffing at Religion, as thoſe who have accuſtomed themſelves to ſwear upon trifling occaſions. For it is juſt with God, to permit thoſe who allow themſelves, in one degree of prophaneneſs, to proceed to another; till at laſt they come to that height of impiety, as to contemn all Religion.

2. Let no man think the worſe of Religion, becauſe ſome are ſo bold as to deſpiſe and deride it. For 'tis no diſparagement to any perſon, or thing, to be laught at, but to deſerve to be ſo. The moſt grave and ſerious matters in the whole world are liable to be abus'd. It is a known ſaying of

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Epictetus, that every thing hath two handles; By which he means, that there is nothing ſo bad, but a man may lay hold of ſomething or other about it, that will afford matter of excuſe and extenuation; nor nothing ſo excellent, but a man may faſten upon ſomething or other belonging to it, whereby to traduce it. A ſharp wit may find ſomething in the wiſeſt man, whereby to expoſe him to the contempt of injudicious people. The graveſt Book that ever was written, may be made ridiculous, by applying the ſayings of it to a fooliſh purpoſe. For a jeſt may be obtruded upon any thing. And therefore no man ought to have the leſs reverence for the principles of Religion, or for the holy Scriptures, becauſe idle and prophane Wits can break jeſts upon them. Nothing is ſo eaſie, as to take particular phraſes and expreſſions out of the beſt Book in the world, and to abuſe them by forcing an odd and ridiculous ſenſe upon them. But no wiſe man will think a good Book fooliſh for this reaſon, but the man that abuſes it: Nor will he eſteem that to which every thing is liable, to be a juſt exception againſt any thing. At this rate we muſt deſpiſe all things; but ſurely the better and the ſhorter way is, to contemn thoſe who

would

would bring any thing that is worthy into contempt.

3. And laſtly, To perſwade men to imploy that reaſon and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purpoſes; in the ſervice, and to the glory of that God who hath beſtowed theſe gifts on men; as *Aholiab* and *Bezaleel* did their mechanical skill, in the adorning and beautifying of God's Tabernacle. For this is the perfection of every thing, to attain its true and proper end: And the end of all thoſe gifts and endowments which God hath given us, is to glorifie the giver.

Here is ſubject enough to exerciſe the wit of men and angels; To praiſe that infinite goodneſs, and almighty power, and exquiſite wiſdom which made us, and all things; and to admire what we can never ſufficiently praiſe; To vindicate the wiſe and juſt providence of God, in the government of the world; and to endeavour, as well as we can upon an imperfect view of things, to make out the beauty and harmony of all the ſeeming diſcords and irregularities of the Divine adminiſtrations; To explain the oracles of the holy Scriptures, and to adore that great myſtery of Divine love (which the Angels, better and nobler creatures than

we are, desire to pry into) God's sending his only Son into the world to save sinners, and to give his life a ransom for them. These would be noble exercises indeed, for the tongues and pens of the greatest Wits. And Subjects of this nature are the best trials of our ability in this kind. Satyr and invective are the easiest kind of wit. Almost any degree of it will serve to abuse and find fault. For wit is a keen Instrument, and every one can cut and gash with it; but to carve a beautiful image, and to polish it, requires great art and dexterity. To praise any thing well, is an argument of much more wit, than to abuse. A little wit, and a great deal of ill nature, will furnish a man for Satyr; but the greatest instance of wit, is to commend well. And perhaps, the best things are the hardest to be duly commended. For though there be a great deal of matter to work upon, yet there is great judgment required to make choice. And where the subject is great and excellent, it is hard not to sink below the dignity of it.

This I say on purpose to recommend to men, a nobler exercise for their wits; and if it be possible, to put them out of conceit with that scoffing humour, which is so

easie,

caſie, and ſo ill natur'd; and is not only an enemy to Religion, but to every thing elſe that is wiſe and worthy. And I am very much miſtaken, if the State as well as the Church, the civil government as well as Religion, do not in a ſhort ſpace find the intolerable inconvenience of this humour.

But I confine my ſelf to the conſideration of Religion. And it is ſad indeed, that in a nation profeſſing Chriſtianity, ſo horrid an impiety ſhould dare to appear. But the Scripture hath foretold us, that this ſort of men ſhould ariſe, in the Goſpel-age; and they did appear, even in the Apoſtles days. That which is more ſad and ſtrange is, that we ſhould perſiſt in this prophaneneſs, notwithſtanding the terrible judgments of God which have been abroad in this Nation. God hath of late years, manifeſted himſelf in a very dreadful manner, as if it were on purpoſe, to give a check to this inſolent impiety. And now that theſe judgments have done no good upon us, we may juſtly fear that he will appear once for all. And 'tis time for him to ſhew himſelf, when his very Being is call'd in queſtion; and to come and judg the world, when men begin to doubt whether he made it.

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The *Scripture* mentions two things as the fore-runners and reaſons of his coming to judgment; *infidelity*, and *profane ſcoffing* at Religion. *When the Son of man comes, ſhall he find faith on the earth?* Luke 18. 8. And St. *Jude*, out of an ancient prophecy of *Enoch*, expreſly mentions this as one reaſon of the coming of the Lord, *to convince ungodly ſinners of all their hard ſpeeches, which they had ſpoken againſt him.* Jude 15. ver.

And if theſe things be a ſign and reaſon of his coming, I wiſh that we in this Age had not too much cauſe to apprehend *the Judg to be at the door*. This impiety did fore-run the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* and the utter ruine of the Jewiſh Nation. And if it hold on amongſt us, may not we have reaſon to fear, that either *the end of all things is at hand*; or that ſome very diſmal calamity, greater than any our eyes have yet ſeen, does hang over us? But I would fain hope that God hath mercy ſtill for us; and that men will pity themſelves, and *repent, and give glory to God*, and *know, in this their day, the things that belong to their peace*. Which God of his infinite mercy grant, for the ſake of Chriſt, To whom with the Father, &c.

PROV. xiv. 34.

Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation; but ſin is the reproach of any people.

ONE of the firſt principles that is planted in the nature of man, and which lies at the very root and foundation of his being is the deſire of his own preſervation and happineſs. Hence is it that every man is led by intereſt, and does love or hate, chuſe or refuſe things, according as he apprehends them to conduce to this end, or to contradict it. And becauſe the happineſs of this life is moſt preſent and ſenſible, therefore humane nature (which in this degenerate ſtate is extreamly ſunk down into ſenſe) is moſt powerfully affected

fected with ſenſible and temporal things. And conſequently, there cannot be a greater prejudice raiſed againſt any thing, than to have it repreſented as inconvenient and hurtful to our temporal intereſts.

Upon this account it is, that Religion hath extremely ſuffer'd in the opinion of many, as if it were oppoſite to our preſent welfare, and did rob men of the greateſt advantages and conveniences of life. So that he that would do right to Religion, and make a ready way for the entertainment of it among men, cannot take a more effectual courſe, than by reconciling it with the happineſs of mankind, and by giving ſatisfaction to our reaſon, that it is ſo far from being an enemy, that it is the greateſt friend to our temporal intereſts; and that it doth not only tend to make every man happy, conſider'd ſingly and in a private capacity, but is excellently fitted for the benefit of human ſociety.

How much Religion tends, even to the temporal advantage of private perſons, I ſhall not now conſider; becauſe my Text leads me to diſcourſe of the other; namely, to ſhew how advantageous Religion and Virtue are to the publick proſperity of a Nation, which I take to be the meaning

of

of this *Aphoriſm* of *Solomon*, *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation*, &c.

And here I ſhall not reſtrain *righteouſneſs* to the particular virtue of juſtice, (though in this ſenſe alſo this ſaying is moſt true) but enlarge it according to the *genius* and ſtrain of this Book of the *Proverbs*, in which the words, *wiſdom* and *righteouſneſs* are commonly uſed very comprehenſively, ſo as to ſignifie all Religion and Virtue. And that this word is ſo to be taken in the Text, may appear further from the oppoſition of it to ſin or vice in general; *Righteouſneſs* exalteth a Nation, but *Sin* is the reproach of any People.

You ſee then what will be the ſubject of my preſent diſcourſe; namely, that *Religion and Virtue are the great cauſes of publick happineſs and proſperity.*

And though the truth of this hath been univerſally acknowledged, and long enough experienced in the world; yet becauſe the faſhion of the age is to call every thing into queſtion, it will be requiſite to ſatisfy mens reaſon about it. To which end I ſhall do theſe two things:

1. Endeavour to give an account of this Truth.

22. To vindicate it from the pretences and insinuations of atheistical persons.

I. I shall give you this two-fold account of it.

1. From the justice of the Divine providence.

2. From the natural tendency of the thing.

1. From the justice of the Divine providence. Indeed, as to particular persons, the providences of God are many times promiscuously administred in this world; so that no man can certainly conclude God's love or hatred to any person by any thing that befalls him in this life. But God do's not deal thus with Nations. Because publick bodies and communities of men, as such, can only be rewarded and punished in this world. For in the next, all those publick societies and combinations, wherein men are now link'd together under several Governments, shall be dissolved. God will not then reward or punish Nations, as Nations; But every man shall then give an account of himself to God, and receive his own reward, and bear his own burden. For although God account its no disparagement to his justice,

ſtice, to let particular good men ſuffer in this world, and paſs *through many tribulations into the kingdom of God*; becauſe there is another day a coming, which will be a more proper ſeaſon of rewards: yet in the uſual courſe of his providence, he recompenceth religious and vertuous Nations with temporal bleſſings, and proſperity. For which reaſon St. *Auſtin* tells us, that the mighty ſucceſs and long proſperity of the *Romans*, was a reward given them by God, for their eminent juſtice and temperance, and other virtues. And on the other hand, God many times ſuffers the moſt grievous Sins of particular perſons, to go unpuniſhed in this world; becauſe he knows that his juſtice will have another and better oppoſtunity to meet and reckon with them. But the general and crying ſins of a Nation, cannot hope to eſcape publick judgments, unleſs they be prevented by a general repentance. God may defer his judgments for a time, and give a People a longer ſpace of repentance; he may ſtay till the iniquities of a Nation be full: but ſooner or later, they have reaſon to expect his vengeance. And uſually, the longer puniſhment is delay'd, it is the heavier when it comes.

Now all this is very reaſonable, becauſe

this world is the only ſeaſon for National puniſhments. And indeed they are in a great degree neceſſary, for the preſent vindication of the honour and majeſty of the Divine laws, and to give ſome check to the overflowing of wickedneſs. Publick judgments are the banks and ſhores upon which God breaks the inſolency of ſinners, and ſtays their proud waves. And though among men, the multitude of offenders be many times a cauſe of impunity, becauſe of the weakneſs of humane Governments, which are glad to ſpare, where they are not ſtrong enough to puniſh: yet in the government of God, things are quite otherwiſe. No combination of ſinners is too hard for him, and the greater and more numerous the offenders are, the more his juſtice is conceru'd to vindicate the affront. However God may paſs by ſingle ſinners in this world, yet when a Nation combines againſt him, *when hand joynes in hand, the wicked ſhall not go unpuniſhed.*

This the *Scripture* declares to be the ſetled courſe of God's providence; That a righteous Nation ſhall be happy; *The work of Righteouſneſs ſhall be peace; and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.* And on the other hand, that

that he uſeth to ſhower down his judgments upon a wicked people, *he turneth a fruitful land into barrenneſs, for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein.*

And the experience of all ages hath made this good. All along the hiſtory of the *old Teſtament*, we find the interchangeable providences of God towards the People of *Iſrael*, always ſuited to their manners. They were conſtantly proſperous or afflicted, according as piety and virtue flouriſhed or declined amongſt them. And God did not only exerciſe this providence towards his own People, but he dealt thus alſo with other Nations. The *Roman Empire*, whilſt the virtue of that people remained firm, was *ſtrong as iron*, as 'tis repreſented in the Propheſie of *Daniel*: But upon the diſſolution of their manners, the *iron* began *to be mixt with miry clay*, and the *feet* upon which that Empire ſtood, *to be broken*. And though God in the adminiſtration of his juſtice, be not tied to precedents; and we cannot argue from Scripture-examples, that the providences of God towards other Nations, ſhall in all circumſtances be conformable to his dealings with the People of *Iſrael*; yet thus much may with great probability be collected from them, that

as God always bleſſed that People, while they were obedient to him, and followed them with his judgments, when they rebelled againſt him, ſo he will alſo deal with other Nations. Becauſe the reaſon of thoſe diſpenſations, as to the main and ſubſtance of them ſeems to be perpetual, and founded in that which can never change, the juſtice of the Divine providence.

2*dly*, The truth of this further appears, from the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion in general, and every particular virtue, doth in its own nature conduce to the publick Intereſt.

Religion, where-ever it is truly planted, is certainly the greateſt obligation upon conſcience to all civil offices and moral duties. Chaſtity and temperance, and induſtry, do in their own nature tend to health and plenty. Truth and fidelity in all our dealings, do create mutual love, and good-will and confidence among men, which are the great bands of peace. And on the contrary, wickedneſs doth in its own nature produce many publick miſchiefs. For as ſins are link'd together, and draw on one another; ſo almoſt every vice hath ſome temporal inconvenience annexed to it, and naturally following

ing it. Intemperance and luſt breed infirmities and diſeaſes, which, being propagated, ſpoil the ſtrain of a Nation. Idleneſs and luxury bring forth poverty and want; and this tempts men to injuſtice, and that cauſeth enmity and animoſities, and theſe bring on *ſtrife* and *confuſion and every evil work.* This Philoſophical account of publick troubles and confuſions St. *James* gives us, *whence come warrs and fightings among you? are they not hence, even from your luſts, that warr in your members?* Jam. 4. 1.

But I ſhall ſhew more particularly, that Religion and virtue do naturally tend to the good order, and more eaſie government of humane Society; becauſe they have a good influence both upon Magiſtrates and ſubjects.

1. Upon Magiſtrates. Religion teacheth them to rule over men in the fear of God; becauſe though they be Gods on earth, yet they are ſubjects of Heaven, and accountable to Him who is higher than the higheſt in this world. Religion in a Magiſtrate ſtrengthens his authority, becauſe it procures veneration, and gains a reputation to it. And in all the affairs of this world, ſo much reputation is really ſo much power. We ſee that piety and Vir-

tue, where they are found among men of lower degree, will command ſome reverence and reſpect: But in perſons of eminent place and dignity, they are ſeated to a great advantage; ſo as to caſt a luſtre upon their very Place, and by a ſtrong reflection to double the beams of Majeſty. Whereas impiety and vice do ſtrangely leſſen greatneſs, and do ſecretly and unavoidably derive ſome weakneſs upon authority it ſelf. Of this the *Scripture* gives us a remarkable inſtance in *David*. For among other things which made *the Sons of Zurviah too hard for him*; this probably was none of the leaſt, that they were particularly conſcious to his crimes.

2. Religion hath a good influence upon the People; to make them obedient to Government, and peaceable one towards another.

1. To make them obedient to Government, and comfortable to Laws; and that *not only for wrath*, and out of fear of the Magiſtrates power, which is but a weak and looſe principle of obedience, and will ceaſe when ever men can rebel with ſafety, and to advantage; but out *of Conſcience*, which is a firm, and conſtant, and laſting principle, and will hold a man faſt, when all other obligations will break. He that

that hath entertain'd the true principles of Chriſtianity, is not to be tempted from his obedience and ſubjection, by any worldly conſiderations; becauſe he believes that *whatſoever reſiſteth authority, reſiſteth the ordinance of God*; and that *they who reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves damnation.*

2. Religion tends to make men peaceable one towards another. For it endeavours to plant all thoſe qualities and diſpoſitions in men, which tend to peace and unity; and to fill men with a ſpirit of univerſal love and good-will. It endeavours likewiſe, to ſecure every mans intereſt, by commanding the obſervation of that great Rule of equity, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them*; by enjoyning, that truth and fidelity be inviolably obſerved in all our words, promiſes and contracts. And in order hereunto, it requires the extirpation of all thoſe paſſions and vices which render men unſociable and troubleſome to one another, as pride, covetouſneſs, and injuſtice, hatred, and revenge, and cruelty; and thoſe likewiſe which are not ſo commonly reputed vices, as ſelf-conceit, and peremptorineſs in a man's own opinion; and all peviſhneſs, and incom-

incompliance of humour in things lawful and indifferent.

And that theſe are the proper effects of true piety, the doctrine of our Saviour and his Apoſtles every where teacheth us. Now if this be the deſign of Religion, to bring us to this temper; thus to heal the natures of men, and to ſweeten their ſpirits; to correct their paſſions, and to mortify all thoſe luſts which are the cauſes of enmity and diviſion; then it is evident, that in its own nature it tends to the peace and happineſs of humane ſociety; and that if men would but live as Religion requires they ſhould do, the world would be a quiet habitation, a moſt lovely and deſirable place, in compariſon of what now it is. And indeed, the true reaſon why the ſocieties of men are ſo full of tumult and diſorder, ſo troubleſome and tempeſtuous, is becauſe there is ſo little of true Religion among men; ſo that were it not for ſome ſmall remainders of piety and virtue, which are yet left ſcatter'd among mankind, humane ſociety would in a ſhort ſpace disband and run into confuſion; the earth would grow wild, and become a great forreſt, and mankind would become beaſts of prey one towards another. And if this diſcourſe

hold

hold true, ſurely then one would think that virtue ſhould find it ſelf a ſeat where-ever humane ſocieties are; and that Religion ſhould be owned and encouraged in the world, until men ceaſe to be governed by reaſon.

II. I come to vindicate this truth from the inſinuations and pretences of atheiſtical perſons. I ſhall mention two.

1. That Government may ſubſiſt well enough without the belief of a God, and a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life.

2. That as for virtue and vice, they are arbitrary things.

1. That Government may ſubſiſt well enough without the belief of a God, or a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life. And this the atheiſt does, and muſt aſſert; otherwiſe he is, by his own confeſſion, a declared enemy to Government, and unfit to live in humane ſociety.

For anſwer to this; I will not deny, but that though the generality of men did not believe any ſuperior Being, nor any rewards and puniſhments after this life; yet notwithſtanding this, there might be ſome kind of Government kept up in the world.

world. For ſuppoſing men to have reaſon, the neceſſities of humane nature, and the miſchiefs of confuſion would probably compel them into ſome kind of order. But then I ſay withall, that if theſe principles were baniſhed out of the world, Government would be far more difficult than now it is, becauſe it would want its firmeſt Baſis and foundation; there would be infinitely more diſorders in the world, if men were reſtrained from injuſtice and violence only by humane laws, and not by principles of conſcience, and the dread of another world. Therefore Magiſtrates have always thought themſelves concerned to cheriſh Religion, and to maintain in the minds of men the belief of a God and another life. Nay that common ſuggeſtion of atheiſtical perſons, that Religion was at firſt a politick device, and is ſtill kept up in the world as a State-engine to awe men into obedience, is a clear acknowledgment of the uſefulneſs of it to the ends of Government; and does as fully contradict that pretence of theirs which I am now confuting, as any thing that can be ſaid.

2. That virtue and vice are arbitrary things, founded only in the imaginations of men, and in the conſtitutions and

cuſtoms

cuſtoms of the world, but not in the nature of the things themſelves; and that *that* is virtue or vice, good or evil, which the Supream Authority of a Nation declares to be ſo. And this is freequently and confidently aſſerted by the ingenious Author of a very bad Book, I mean, the *Leviathan*.

Now the proper way of anſwering any thing that is confidently aſſerted, is to ſhew the contrary, namely, That there are ſome things that have a natural evil and deformity in them, as perjury, perfidiouſneſs, unrighteouſneſs and ingratitude, which are things, not only condemned by the poſitive laws and conſtitutions of particular Nations and Governments, but by the general verdict of humane nature: And that the virtues contrary to theſe, have a natural goodneſs and comlineſs in them, and are ſuitable to the common principles and ſentiments of humanity.

And this will moſt evidently appear, by putting this ſuppoſition. Suppoſe the reverſe of all that which we now call virtue, were ſolemnly enacted; and the practice of fraud, and rapine, and perjury, and falſeneſs to a man's word, and all manner of vice and wickedneſs were eſta-

eſtabliſhed by a Law. I ask now, if the caſe between virtue and vice were thus alter'd, would that which we now call vice, in proceſs of time gain the reputation of virtue; and that which we now call virtue, grow odious and contemptible to humane nature? If it would not; then is there ſomething in the nature of good and evil, of virtue and vice, which does not depend upon the pleaſure of Authority, nor is ſubject to any arbitrary Conſtitution. But that it would not be thus, I am very certain; becauſe no Government could ſubſiſt upon theſe terms. For the very enjoyning of fraud, and rapine, and perjury, and breach of truſt, doth apparently deſtroy the greateſt end of Government, which is to preſerve men in their rights, againſt the encroachments of fraud and violence. And this end being deſtroyed, humane ſocieties would preſently flye in pieces, and men would neceſſarily fall into a ſtate of war. Which plainly ſhews, that virtue and vice are not arbitrary things, but that there is a natural, and immutable, and eternal reaſon for that which we call goodneſs and virtue, and againſt that which we call vice and wickedneſs.

Thus I have endeavoured to evidence and

and vindicate this truth. I ſhall only draw an Inference or two from this diſcourſe, and ſo conclude.

1. If this diſcourſe be true, then thoſe who are in place of power and authority, are peculiarly concerned to maintain the honour of Religion.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of it.

1. Magiſtrates are concerned to maintain the honour of Religion, which doth not only tend to every man's future happineſs, but is the beſt inſtrument of Civil Government, and of the temporal proſperity of a Nation. For the whole deſign of it is, to procure the private and publick happineſs of mankind; and to reſtrain men from all thoſe things, which would make them miſerable and guilty to themſelves, unpeaceable and troubleſome to the world. Religion hath ſo great an influence upon the felicity of men, that it ought to be upheld, and the veneration of it maintained, not only out of a juſt dread of the Divine vengeance in another world, but out of a regard to the temporal peace and proſperity of men. It will requite all the kindneſs and ho-

honour we can do it, by the advantages it will bring to civil Government, and by the bleſſings it will draw down upon it. God hath promiſed, that *thoſe that honour him, he will honour*; and, in the common courſe of his providence, he uſually makes this good, So that the civil Authority ought to be very tender of the honour of God and Religion, if for no other reaſon, yet out of *reaſon of State*.

It were to be wiſht that all men were ſo piouſly diſpoſed, that Religion by its own authority, and the reaſonable force of it, might be ſufficient to eſtabliſh its Empire in the minds of men. But the corruptions of men will always make a ſtrong oppoſition againſt it. And therefore, at the firſt planting of the Chriſtian Religion in the world, God was pleaſed to accompany it with a miraculous power: But after it was planted, this extraordinary power ceaſed; and God hath now left it to be maintained and ſupported by more ordinary and humane ways, by the countenance of Authority, and the aſſiſtance of Laws; which were never more neceſſary than in this degenerate age, which is prodigiouſly ſunk into atheiſm & prophaneneſs, and is running head-long into an humour of ſcoffing at God and Religion

ligion, and every thing that is ſacred. For ſome ages before the Reformation atheiſm was confined to *Italy*, and had its chief reſidence at *Rome*. All the mention that is of it in the hiſtory of thoſe times, the Papiſts themſelves give us in the lives of their own Popes and Cardinals; excepting two or three ſmall Philoſophers that were retainers to that Court. So that this atheiſtical humour among Chriſtians, was the ſpawn of the groſs ſuperſtitious, and corrupt manners of the Romiſh Church and Court. And indeed nothing is more natural, than for extreams in Religion to beget one another; like the vibrations of a *pendulum*, which the more violently you ſwing it one way, the farther it will return the other. But in the laſt age, atheiſm travell'd over the *Alpes*, and infected *France*; and now of late it hath croſſed the Seas, and invaded our Nation, and harh prevailed to amazement: For I do not think, that there are any People in the World, that are generally more indiſpoſed to it, and can worſe brook it; ſeriouſneſs and zeal in Religion being almoſt the natural temper of the *Engliſh*. So that nothing is to me matter of greater wonder, than that in a grave and ſober Nation, prophaneneſs ſhould ever come

to gain ſo much ground, and the beſt and the wiſeſt Religion in the world to be made the ſcorn of fools. For beſides the prophane and atheiſtical diſcourſes about God and Religion, and the bold and ſenſleſs abuſes of this *ſacred Book*, the great inſtruments of our ſalvation, which are ſo frequent in the publick places of reſort; I ſay, beſides theſe (I ſpeak it knowingly) a man can hardly paſs the ſtreets, without having his ears grated and pierced with ſuch horrid and blaſphemous oaths and curſes as are enough, if we were guilty of no other ſin, to ſink a Nation. And this not only from the *Tribe* that wear Liveries, but from thoſe that go before them, and ſhould give better example. Is it not then high time, that the Laws ſhould provide by the moſt prudent and effectual means, to curb theſe bold and inſolent defiers of Heaven, who take a pride in being monſters, and boaſt themſelves in the follies and deformities of humane nature? The Heathens would never ſuffer their Gods to be reviled, which yet were no Gods. And ſhall it, among the profeſſors of the true Religion, be allowed to any man, to make a mock of Him that made Heaven and earth, and to breath out blaſphemies againſt,

againſt Him, who gives us life and breath, and all things? I doubt not but hypocriſie is a great wickedneſs, and very odious to God; but by no means of ſo pernicious example, as open prophaneneſs. Hypocriſie is a more modeſt way of ſining, it ſhews ſome reverence to Religion, and does ſo far own the worth and excellency of it, as to acknowledg that it deſerves to be counterfeited: Whereas prophaneneſs declares openly againſt it, and endeavours to make a party to drive it out of the world.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of Religion and Virtue; Becauſe the publick happineſs and proſperity depends upon it. It is moſt apparent, that of late years, Religion is very ſenſibly declin'd among us. The manners of men have almoſt been univerſally corrupted by a Civil war. We ſhould therefore all jointly endeavour, to retrieve the ancient virtue of the Nation, and to bring into faſhion again that ſolid and ſubſtantial, that plain and unaffected piety, (free from the extreams both of ſuperſtition, and enthuſiaſm) which flouriſhed in the age of our immediate forefathers. Which did not conſiſt in idle talk, but in real effects; in a ſincere love of God, and of our neighbour;

in a pious devotion and reverence towards the Divine Majeſty, and in the virtuous actions of a good life; in the denial of *ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and *in living ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* This were the true way to reconcile God to us, to ſtop the courſe of his judgments, and to bring down the bleſſings of Heaven upon us.

God hath now been pleaſed to ſettle us again in peace, both at home and abroad; and he hath put us once more into the hands of our own counſel. Life and Death, bleſſing and curſing, proſperity and deſtruction are before us. We may chuſe our own fortune; and if we be not wanting to our ſelves, we may under the influences of Gods grace and aſſiſtance, which is never wanting to our ſincere endeavours, become a happy and a proſperous People.

The good God make us all wiſe, to know, and to do the things that belong to the temporal peace and proſperity of the Nation, and to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of every one of our ſouls, which we humbly beg for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, to whom, &c.

PSALM

PSALM xix. 11.

And in keeping of them there is great reward.

IN this *Pſalm*, *David* celebrates the glory of God from the conſideration of the greatneſs of his Works, and the perfection of his Laws. From the greatneſs of his Works, *verſe* 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſhewetb his handy-work*, &c. From the perfection of his Laws, *verſe* 7. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul*, &c. And among many other excellencies of the Divine laws, he mentions in the laſt place, the benefits and advantages which come from the obſervance of them, *verſe* 11. *and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

I have already ſhown, how much Reli-

gion tends to the publick welfare of mankind; to the ſupport of Government, and to the peace and happineſs of humane Societies. My work at this time ſhall be, to ſhew that Religion and obedience to the Laws of God, do likewiſe conduce to the happineſs of particular perſons, both in reſpect of this world and the other. For though there be but little expreſs mention made in the *Old Teſtament*, of the immortality of the Soul, and the rewards of another life; yet all Religion does ſuppoſe theſe principles, and is built upon them.

I. And *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, how Religion conduceth to the happineſs of this life; and that both in reſpect of the inward and outward man.

Firſt, as to the mind; to be pious and religious, brings this double advantage to the mind of man. 1. It tends to the improvement of our underſtandings. 2. It brings peace and pleaſure to our minds.

1. It tends to the improvement of our underſtandings. I do not mean only, that it inſtructs us in the knowledg of divine and ſpiritual things, and makes us to underſtand the great intereſt of our ſouls, and the concernments of eternity better; but that in general, it does raiſe and enlarge the minds

minds of men, and make them more capable of true knowledg. And in this ſenſe I underſtand the following Texts; *The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the eyes*; Pſal. 19. 8. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom, a good underſtanding have all they that keep his commandments*; Pſal. 111. 10. *Thou through thy commandments haſt made me wiſer than my enemies*, which Pſal. 119. 98. plainly refers to pollitical prudence; *I have more underſtanding than all my teachers, for thy Teſtimonies are my meditation*; ver. 99. *I underſtand more than the ancients, becauſe I keep thy precepts*; *Through thy precepts I get underſtanding*; *The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth underſtanding to the ſimple.* ver. 104. ver. 130.

Now Religion doth improve the underſtandings of men, by ſubduing their luſts, and moderating their paſſions. The luſts and paſſions of men do ſully and darken their minds, even by a natural influence. Intemperance, and ſenſuality, and fleſhly luſts, do debaſe mens minds, and clog their ſpirits, make them groſs and foul, liſtleſs and unactive; they ſink us down into ſenſe, and glew us to theſe low and inferiour things; like *birdlime* they hamper and entangle our ſouls, and hinder their flight upwards; they indiſpoſe and unfit our

minds for the moſt noble and intellectual conſiderations. So likewiſe the exorbitant paſſions, of wrath and malice, envy and revenge, do darken and diſtort the underſtandings of men, do tincture the mind with falſe colours, and fill it with prejudice and undue apprehenſions of things.

There is no man that is intemperate, or luſtful, or paſſionate, but beſides the guilt he contracts, which is continually fretting and diſquieting his mind; beſides the inconveniences he brings upon himſelf as to his health, he does likewiſe ſtain and obſcure the brightneſs of his Soul, and the clearneſs of his diſcerning faculty. Such perſons have not that free uſe of their reaſon that they might have: their underſtandings are not bright enough, nor their ſpirits pure and fine enough, for the exerciſe of the higheſt and nobleſt acts of reaſon. What clearneſs is to the eye, that purity is to our mind and underſtanding; and as the clearneſs of the bodily eye doth diſpoſe it for a quicker ſight of material objects, ſo doth the purity of our mind, that is freedom from luſt and paſſion, diſpoſe us for the cleareſt and moſt perfect acts of reaſon and underſtanding.

Now Religion doth purifie our minds, and refine our ſpirits, by quenching the fire

fire of luſt, and ſuppreſſing the fumes and vapours of it; and by ſcattering the clouds and miſts of paſſion. And the more any man's ſoul is cleanſed from the filth and dregs of ſenſual luſts, the more nimble and expedite it will be in its operations. The more any man conquers his paſſions, the more calm and ſedate his ſpirit is, and the greater equality he maintains in his temper, his apprehenſions of things will be the more clear and unprejudic'd, and his judgment more firm and ſteddy. And this is the meaning of that ſaying of *Solomon*, *He that is ſlow to wrath is of great underſtanding, but he that is haſty of ſpirit exalteth folly.* *Ira furor brevis eſt* ——Anger is a ſhort fit of madneſs, and he that is paſſionate and furious deprives himſelf of his reaſon, ſpoils his underſtanding, and helps to make himſelf a fool: whereas he that conquers his paſſions, and keeps them under, doth thereby preſerve and improve his underſtanding. Freedom from irregular paſſions doth not only ſignifie that a man is wiſe, but really contributes to the making of him ſuch.

2. Religion tends to the eaſe and pleaſure, the peace and tranquility of our minds; wherein happineſs chiefly conſiſts, and which all the wiſdom and Philoſophy of

of the world did always aim at, as the utmoſt felicity of this life. And that this is the natural fruit of a Religious and virtuous courſe of life, the Scripture declares to us in theſe Texts; *Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart*; *great peace have all they that love thy Law, & nothing ſhall offend them*; *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace*; *The fruit of righteouſneſs is peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs quietneſs and aſſurance for ever*; The plain ſenſe of which Texts is, that pleaſure and peace do naturally reſult from a holy and good life. When a man hath once engag'd himſelf in a Religious courſe, and is habituated to piety and holineſs, all the exerciſes of Religion and devotion, all acts of goodneſs and virtue are delightful to him. To honour and worſhip God, to pray to him and to praiſe him, to ſtudy his will, to meditate upon him and to love him, all theſe bring great pleaſure and peace along with them. What greater contentment and ſatisfaction can there be to the mind of man, when it is once purifi'd and refin'd from the dregs of ſenſual pleaſures and delights, and rais'd to its true height and pitch, than to contemplate and admire the infinite excellencies and perfections of God

Pſa. 97. 11
Pſal. 119. 165.
Pro. 3. 17.
Iſa. 32. 17

God, to adore his greatneſs and to love his goodneſs? How can the thoughts of God be troubleſom to any one, who lives ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in the world? No man that loves goodneſs and righteouſneſs, hath any reaſon to be afraid of God, or to be diſquieted with the thoughts of him. There is nothing in God that is terrible to a good man; but all the apprehenſions which we naturally have of him, ſpeak comfort, and promiſe happineſs to ſuch a one. The conſideration of his attributes is ſo far from being a trouble to him, that it is his recreation and delight. It is for wicked men to dread God, and to endeavour to baniſh the thoughts of him out of their minds; but a holy and virtuous man may have quiet and undiſturb'd thoughts, even of the juſtice of God, becauſe the terrour of it doth not concern him.

Now Religion doth contribute to the peace and quiet of our minds theſe two ways. *Firſt*, By allaying thoſe paſſions which are apt to ruffle and diſcompoſe our ſpirits. Malice and hatred, wrath and revenge, are very fretting and vexatious, and apt to make our minds ſore and uneaſie; but he that can moderate theſe affections, will find a ſtrange eaſe and pleaſure

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in his own ſpirit. *Secondly*, By freeing us from the anxieties of guilt, and the fears of divine wrath and diſpleaſure; than which, nothing is more ſtinging and tormenting, and renders the life of man more miſerable and unquiet. And what a ſpring of peace and joy muſt it needs be, to apprehend, upon good grounds, that God is reconcil'd to us, and become our friend; that all our ſins are perfectly forgiven, and ſhall never more be remembred againſt us! What unexpreſſible comfort does overflow the pious and devout ſoul, from the remembrance of a holy and well-ſpent life, and a conſcience of its own innocency and integrity! And nothing but the practice of Religion and virtue, can give this eaſe and ſatisfaction to the mind of man. For there is a certain kind of temper and diſpoſition, which is neceſſary to the pleaſure and quiet of our minds, and conſequently to our happineſs: and that is holineſs and goodneſs; which as it is the perfection, ſo is it likewiſe the happineſs of the Divine nature: And on the contrary, the chief part of the miſery of wicked men, and of thoſe accurſed ſpirits the Devils, is this, that they are of a diſpoſition contrary to God; they are envious, and malicious, and cruel, and of ſuch a temper as

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is naturally a torment and diſquiet to it ſelf. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil diſpoſition of mens minds; and till this be cur'd, which can only be done by Religion, it is as impoſſible for a man to be happy, that is, pleas'd and contented within himſelf, as it is for a ſick man to be at eaſe. Becauſe ſuch a man hath that within him which torments him, and he cannot be at eaſe till that be remov'd. The man's ſpirit is out of order, and off the hinges; and till that be put into its right frame, he will be perpetually diſquieted, and can find no reſt within himſelf. The *Prophet* very fitly deſcribes to us the unquiet condition of wicked men, *The wicked is like the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt; there is no peace (ſaith my God) to the wicked.* So long as ſin and corruption abound in our hearts, they will be reſtleſly working; like wine, which will be in a perpetual motion and agitation, till it have purg'd it ſelf of its dregs and foulneſs. Iſa. 57. 20 21.

Secondly, Religion does likewiſe tend to the happineſs of the outward man. Now the bleſſings of this kind are ſuch, as either reſpect our *health*, or *eſtate*, or *reputation*, or *relations*; and in reſpect of all theſe, Religion is highly advantageous to us,

1. As

1. As to our health, a Religious and virtuous life doth eminently conduce to that, and to long life as a conſequent of it. And in this ſenſe I underſtand theſe following Texts; *My ſon forget not my Law,* Prov. 3. 1, 2. *but let thy heart keep my Commandments; for length of days, and long life, ſhall they add to thee*; and v. 7 and 8. *Fear the Lord and depart from evil, it ſhall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones*; and v. 16. among the temporal advantages of wiſdom or religion, this mention'd as the firſt and principal, *length of days is in her right hand*; and v. 18. *ſhe is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her*; & again, Pro. 8. 35, 36. *whoſo findeth me, findeth life; but he that ſinneth againſt me, wrongeth his own ſoul*; (that is injurious to his own life) *all they that hate me love death*; all which is undoubtedly true in a ſpiritual ſenſe, but is certainly meant by *Solomon* in the natural ſenſe. And theſe promiſes, of the bleſſings of health and long life to good men, are not only declaratory of the good pleaſure and intention of God towards them, but likewiſe of the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion doth oblige men to the practice of thoſe virtues, which do in their own nature conduce to the preſervation of our health, and the lengthning of our

our days; ſuch as temperance and chaſtity, and moderation of our paſſions. And the contrary vices to theſe do apparently tend to the impairing of mens health, and the ſhortning of their days. How many have waſted and conſum'd their bodies by luſt, and brought grievous pains and mortal diſeaſes upon themſelves. See how the wiſe man deſcribes the ſad conſequences of this ſin, *He goes as an Oxe to the ſlaughter, till a dart ſtrike through his Liver; as a Bird haſteneth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his life*; and v. 25,26,27. *Let not thy heart decline to her ways, go not aſtray in her paths; for ſhe hath caſt down many wounded, yea many young men have been ſlain by her; her houſe is the way to Hell*, (that is, to the grave) *going down to the chambers of death*. How many have been ruin'd by intemperance and exceſs, and moſt unaturally have perverted thoſe bleſſings, which God hath given for the ſupport of nature, to the overthrow and deſtruction of it? How often hath mens malice and envy and diſcontent againſt others, terminated in a cruel revenge upon themſelves? How many by the wild fury and extravagancy of their own paſſions, have put their bodies into a combuſtion, and fir'd their ſpirits; & by ſtirring up their Pro. 7. 22, 23.

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rage and choler againſt others, have arm'd that fierce humour againſt themſelves?

2. As to our eſtates. Religion is likewiſe a mighty advantage to men in that reſpect. Not only in regard of God's more eſpecial providence, and peculiar bleſſing which uſually attends good men in their undertakings, and crowns them with good ſucceſs; but alſo from the nature of the thing. And this, I doubt not, is the meaning of thoſe expreſſions of the *Wiſe man*, concerning the temporal benefits and advantages of wiſdom or Religion; *In her left hand are riches and honour*; *They that love me ſhall inherit ſubſtance, and I will fill their treaſures*, And this Religion principally does, by charging men with truth and fidelity and juſtice in their dealings, which are a ſure way of thriving, and will hold out when all fraudulent arts and devices will fail. And this alſo *Solomon* obſerves to us; *He that walketh uprightly walketh ſurely, but he that perverteth his way ſhall be known*; his indirect dealing will be diſcover'd one time or other, and then loſes his reputation, and his intereſt ſinks. Falſhood and deceit only ſerve a preſent turn, and the conſequence of them is pernicious; but truth and fidelity are of laſting advantage; *The righteous hath an ever-*

Pro. 3. 16.
Pro. 8. 21.
Pro. 10. 9.
Prov. 10. 25.

everlaſting foundation; *The lip of truth is eſtabliſhed for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.* And Religion does likewiſe engage men to diligence and induſtry in their callings; and how much this conduces to the advancement of mens fortunes, daily experience teaches, and the *Wiſe-man* hath told us, *The diligent hand makes rich*; and again, *Seeſt thou a man diligent in buſineſs, he ſhall ſtand before Princes, he ſhall not ſtand before mean perſons.* Prov. 12. 19. Pro. 10. 4. Prov. 22. 19.

And where men by reaſon of the difficult circumſtances of their condition cannot arrive to any eminency of eſtate, yet Religion makes a compenſation for this, by teaching men to be contented with that moderate and competent fortune which God hath given them. For the ſhorteſt way to be rich, is not by enlarging our eſtates, but by contracting our deſires. What *Seneca* ſays of Philoſophy, is much more true of Religion, *præſtat opes ſapientia, quas cuicunque fecit ſupervacuas dedit*, it makes all thoſe rich to whom it makes riches ſuperfluous; and they are ſo to thoſe, who are taught by Religion to be contented with ſuch a portion of them, as Gods providence hath thought fit to allot to them.

3. As to our reputation. There is no-

thing gives a man a more firm and eſtabliſhed reputation among wiſe and ſerious perſons (whoſe judgment is only valuable) than a prudent and ſubſtantial piety. This doth many times command reverence and eſteem from the worſer ſort of men, and ſuch as are no great friends to Religion; and ſometimes the force of truth will extort an acknowledgment of its excellency, even from its greateſt enemies. I know very well that good men may, and often do, blemiſh the reputation of their piety, by over-acting ſome things in Religion; by an indiſcreet zeal about things wherein Religion is not concerned, by an ungrateful auſterity and ſowrneſs which Religion doth not require; by little affectations, and an imprudent oſtentation of devotion: but a ſubſtantial and ſolid, a diſcreet and unaffected piety, which makes no great noiſe and ſhow, but expreſſes it ſelf in a conſtant and ſerious devotion, and is accompanied with the fruits of goodneſs, and kindneſs, and righteouſneſs towards men, will not only give a man a credit and value among the ſober and the virtuous, but even among the vicious and more degenerate ſort of men. Upon this account it is, that the Apoſtle adviſeth Chriſtians, if they would recommend them-

themſelves to the eſteem of God and men, earneſtly to mind the weighty and ſubſtantial parts of Religion; *Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of; for the Kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt; for he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

It is true indeed, there are ſome perſons, of ſo profligate a temper, and of ſuch an inveterate enmity to all goodneſs, as to ſcorn and reproach even Religion and Virtue it ſelf. But the reproach of ſuch perſons, does not really wound a mans reputation. For why ſhould any man be troubled at the contumelies of thoſe, whoſe judgment deſerves not to be valued; who deſpiſe goodneſs and good men out of malice and ignorance? If theſe reproaches which they caſt upon them, were the cenſures of wiſe and ſober men, a mans reputation might be concern'd in them; but they are the raſh words of inconſiderate and injudicious men, the extravagant ſpeeches of thoſe who are unexperienc'd in the things they ſpeak againſt; and therefore no wiſe man will be troubl'd at them, or think either Religion, or himſelf, diſparaged by them.

4. As to our Relations. Religion alſo conduceth to the happineſs of theſe, as it derives a large and extenſive bleſſing upon all that belongs to us; the goodneſs of God being ſo diffuſive, as to ſcatter his bleſſings *round about the habitations of the juſt*, and *to ſhew mercy to thouſands of them that love him, and keep his Commandments*. So *David* tells us, *Bleſſed is the man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his Commandments; His ſeed ſhall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright ſhall be bleſſed; Wealth and riches are in his houſe, and his righteouſneſs endureth for ever.* And ſo *Solomon*, *A good man, leaveth an inheritance to his childrens children*; and again, *In the fear of the Lord is ſtrong confidence, and his children ſhall have a place of refuge.* But the wicked derives a curſe upon all that is related to him; he is ſaid *to trouble his own houſe*; and again; *The wicked are overthrown and are not, but the houſe of the righteous ſhall ſtand.*

Pſal. 112. 1, 2, 3. Prov. 13. 22. Prov. 14. 26. Prov. 11. 29. Pro. 12. 7.

But ſetting aſide the conſideration of Gods providence, Religion doth likewiſe in its own nature tend to the welfare of thoſe who are related to us; becauſe it lays the ſtricteſt obligations upon men to take care of their Families and Relations, and

and to make the beſt proviſion, both for their comfortable ſubſiſtence here in this world, and their ſalvation in the next. And thoſe who neglect theſe duties, the Scripture is ſo far from eſteeming them Chriſtians, that it accounts them worſe than Heathens and Infidels, *He that provi-* 1 Tim. 5. 8
deth not for his own, eſpecially thoſe of his own houſe, is worſe than an Infidel, and hath deny'd the faith. This I know is ſpoken in reſpect of temporal proviſion, but it holds *a fortiori* as to the care of their ſouls.

Beſides, it is many times ſeen, that the poſterity of holy and good men, eſpecially of ſuch as have evidenc'd their piety towards God by bounty and charity to men, have met with uſual kindneſs and reſpect from others, and have by a ſtrange and ſecret diſpoſition of Divine providence been unexpectedly car'd and provided for; and that, as they have all the reaſon in the world to believe, upon the account, and for the ſake of the piety and charity of their Parents. This *David* tell us, from his own particular obſervation; *I have been young, and now am old, yet have* Pſa. 37. 25
I not ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread. And that by the *righteous* is here meant the *good and merciful man*, ap-

pears from the deſcription of him in the next words, *He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his ſeed is bleſſed.* And on the contrary, the poſterity of the wicked do many times inherit the fruit of their fathers ſins and vices; and that not only by a juſt judgment of God, but from the natural courſe and conſequence of things. And in this ſenſe that expreſſion in *Job* is often verifi'd, that *God lays up the iniquity of wicked men for their children.* And doth not experience teſtifie, that the intemperate and unjuſt do many times tranſmit their bodily infirmities and diſeaſes to their children, and entail a ſecret curſe upon their eſtates, which does either inſenſibly waſte and conſume it, or eat out the heart and comfort of it? Thus you ſee how Religion in all reſpects conduces to the happineſs of this life.

ver. 26.

Job 21. 19

II. Religion and virtue do likewiſe moſt certainly and directly tend to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of men in the other world. And this is incomparably the greateſt advantage that redounds to men by being Religious, in compariſon of which all temporal conſiderations *are leſs than nothing and vanity.* The worldly advantages that Religion brings to men in

in this preſent life, are a ſenſible recommendation of Religion, even to the loweſt and meaneſt ſpirits: But to thoſe who are rais'd above ſenſe, and aſpire after immortality, who believe the perpetual duration of their ſouls, and the reſurrection of their bodies; to thoſe who are throughly convinc'd of the inconſiderableneſs of this ſhort dying life; and of all the concernments of it, in compariſon of that eternal ſtate which remains for us in another life; to theſe, I ſay, the conſideration of a future happineſs, and of thoſe unſpeakable and everlaſting rewards which ſhall then be given to holineſs and virtue, is certainly the moſt powerful motive, and the moſt likely to prevail upon them. For thoſe who are perſwaded that they ſhall continue for ever, cannot chuſe but aſpire after a happineſs commenſurate to their duration; nor can any thing that is conſcious to it ſelf of its own immortality, be ſatisfi'd and contented with any thing leſs, than the hopes of an endleſs felicity. And this hope Religion alone gives men, and the Chriſtian Religion only can ſettle men in a firm and unſhaken aſſurance of it. But becauſe all men who have entertain'd any Religion, have conſented to theſe principles, of the *immortality of the*

ſoul and the *recompences of another world*, and have always promis'd to themſelves ſome rewards of piety and virtue after this life; and becauſe I did more particularly deſign from this *Text*, to ſpeak of the temporal benefits and advantages which redound to men from Religion: therefore I ſhall content my ſelf to ſhew very briefly, how a Religious and vertuous life doth conduce to our future happineſs. And that upon theſe two accounts; from the promiſe of God, and from the nature of the thing.

1. From the promiſe of God. *Godlineſs* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *hath the promiſe of the life that is to come.* God hath all along in the Scripture, ſuſpended the promiſe of eternal life upon this condition. He hath peremptorily declar'd, that without obedience and holineſs of life no man ſhall ever ſee the Lord. And this very thing, that it is the conſtitution and appointment of God, might be argument enough to us (if there were no other) to convince us of the neceſſity of obeying the Laws of God, in order to our happineſs, and to perſwade us thereunto. For eternal life is the gift of God, and he may do what he will with his own. He is maſter of his own favours, and may

1 Tim. 4. 8.

diſpence

diſpence them upon what terms and conditions he pleaſes. But it is no hard condition that he hath impoſed upon us. If Religion brought no advantages to us in this world, yet the happineſs of Heaven is ſo great, as will abundantly recompence all our pains and endeavours; there is temptation enough in the reward, to engage any man in the work. Had God thought fit to have impos'd the moſt grievous and difficult things upon us, ought we not to have ſubmitted to them, and to have undertaken them with cheerfulneſs, upon ſuch great and glorious encouragements? As *Naaman*'s ſervants ſaid to him in another caſe, *Had he bid thee do ſome great thing, wouldeſt thou not have done it*? So if God had ſaid, that without poverty and actual martyrdom, *no man ſhall ſee the Lord*; would not any man that believes Heaven and Hell, and underſtands what theſe words ſignifie, and what it is to eſcape extream and eternal miſery, and to enjoy unſpeakable and endleſs glory, have been willing to accept theſe conditions? *How much more, when he hath only ſaid, waſh and be clean*, and *Let every man that hath this hope in Him, puriſie himſelf as he is pure*? But God hath

not dealt thus with us; nor is the imposing of this condition of eternal life, a meer arbitrary constitution; therefore I shall endeavour to shew,

2dly, That a Religious and holy life doth, from the very nature and reason of the thing, conduce to our future happiness, by way of necessary disposition and preparation of us for it. We cannot be otherwise happy, but by our conformity to God; without this we cannot possibly love him, nor find any pleasure or happiness in communion with him. For we cannot love a nature contrary to our own, nor delight to converse with it. Therefore Religion, in order to the fitting of us for the happiness of the next life, does design to mortifie our lusts and passions, and to restrain us from the inordinate love of the gross and sensual delights of this world; to call off our minds from these inferiour things, and to raise them to higher and more spiritual objects, that we may be dispos'd from the happiness of the other world, and taught to relish the delights of it: whereas should we set our hearts only upon these things, and be able to taste no pleasure in any thing but what is sensual and earthly, we

must

must needs be extreamly miserable when we come into the other world; because we should meet with nothing to entertain our selves withall, no employment suitable to our disposition, no pleasure that would agree with our deprav'd appetites and vicious enclinations. All that Heaven and Happiness signifies, is unsuitable to a wicked man, and therefore could be no felicity to him. But this I shall have occasion to speak more fully to in my last Discourse.

From all that hath been said, the reasonableness of Religion clearly appears, which tends so directly to the happiness of men, and is upon all accounts calculated for our benefit. Let but all things be truly considered and cast up, and it will be found, that there is no advantage to any man from an irreligious and vicious course of life. I challenge any one, to instance in any real benefit that ever came to him this way. Let the sinner declare what he hath found by experience. Hath lewdness and intemperance been more for his health, than if he had liv'd chastly and soberly? Hath falshood and injustice prov'd at the long run, more for the advancement and

secu-

ſecurity of his eſtate, than truth and honeſty would have done? Hath any vice that he hath lived in, made him more true friends, and gain'd him a better reputation in the world, than the practice of holineſs and virtue would have done? Hath he found *that* peace and ſatisfaction of mind in an evil courſe, and *that* quiet enjoyment of himſelf, and comfortable aſſurance of Gods favour, and good hopes of his future condition, which a religious and virtuous life would have given him? Nay on the contrary, have not ſome of his vices weakn'd his body, and broken his health; have not others diſſipated his eſtate, and reduc'd him to want? What notorious vice is there, that doth not blemiſh a mans reputation, and make him either hated or deſpis'd; and that not only by the wiſe and the virtuous, but even by the generality of men; But was ever any wicked man free from the ſtings of a guilty conſcience, and the torment of a reſtleſs and uneaſie mind? from the ſecret dread of divine diſpleaſure, and of the vengeance of another world? Let the ſinner freely ſpeak the very inward ſenſe of his ſoul in this matter, and ſpare not; and I doubt not, if he will deal clearly and impartially, but

that

that he will acknowledg all this to be true, and is able to confirm it from his own ſad experience. For this is the natural fruit of ſin, and the preſent revenge which it takes upon ſinners, beſides that fearful puniſhment which ſhall be inflicted on them in another life.

What reaſon then can any man pretend againſt Religion, when it is ſo apparently for the benefit not only of humane ſociety, but of every particular perſon; when there is no real intereſt of this world, but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted, and purſued to as great advantage, nay uſually to far greater, by a man that *lives ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in the world*, than by any one that leads the contrary courſe of life? Let no man then ſay, with thoſe prophane perſons whom the *Prophet* ſpeaks of, *It is in vain to ſerve the Lord, and what profit is it that we have kept his commandments?* God has not been ſo hard a maſter to us, that we have reaſon thus to complain of him. He hath given us no laws but what are for our good; nay, ſo gracious hath he been to us, as to link together our duty and our intereſt, and to make thoſe very things the inſtances of our obedience, which are the natural means and cauſes of our happi-

Mal. 3. 14.

neſs,

neſs. The Devil was ſo far in the right, when he charged *Job*, that he did not *ſerve God for nought*. 'Tis he himſelf that is the hard maſter, and makes men ſerve him for nought; who rewards his drudges and ſlaves with nothing but ſhame, and ſorrow, and miſery. But God requires no mans ſervice, upon hard and unreaſonable terms. The greateſt part of our work is a preſent reward to it ſelf; and for whatever elſe we do or ſuffer for him, he offers us abundant conſideration. And if men did but truly and wiſely love themſelves, they would upon this very ground (if there were no other) become Religious. For when all is done, there is no man can ſerve his own intereſt better, than by ſerving God. Religion conduceth both to our preſent and future happineſs; and when the Goſpel chargeth us with piety towards God, and juſtice and charity towards men, and temperance and chaſtity in reference to our ſelves, the true interpretation of theſe Laws is this; God requires of men, in order to their eternal happineſs, that they ſhould do thoſe things which tend to their temporal welfare; that is in plainer words, he promiſes to make us happy for ever, upon condition that we will but do that which is beſt

for

for our ſelves in this world. To conclude, Religion is founded in the intereſt of men rightly apprehended. So that if *the God of this world*, and the luſts of men did not *blind their eyes*, ſo as to render them unfit to diſcern their true intereſt, it would be impoſſible, ſo long as men love themſelves and deſire their own happineſs, to keep them from being Religious; for they could not but conclude that to be their intereſt, and being ſo convinc'd they would reſolve to purſue it and ſtick to it.

PHIL.

PHIL. iij. 8.

Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledg of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord.

IN the beginning of this Chapter, the *Apoſtle* makes a compariſon between the Jewiſh and the Chriſtian Religion; and ſhews the Chriſtian to be in truth and ſubſtance, what the Jewiſh was only in type and ſhadow, v. 3. *We are the Circumciſion, which worſhip God in the ſpirit.* And then he enumerates the ſeveral priviledges he was partaker of, by virtue of his being born in the Jewiſh Church, v. 4. 5, 6. *Though I might alſo have confidence in the fleſh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might*

truſt in the fleſh, I more: circumciſed the eighth day, of the ſtock of Iſrael, &c. And yet he tells us, he was contented to forgo all theſe advantages for Chriſt and the Chriſtian Religion, v. 7. *But what things were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs for Chriſt.* And not only theſe, but if there were any thing elſe that men value in this world, he was willing to hazard that alſo upon the ſame account, v. 8. *Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledg of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord.*

In which words the Apoſtle declares the high eſteem he had for the Chriſtian Religion, which he calls the *knowledg of Chriſt Jeſus* his *Lord*; the excellency whereof appear'd ſo great to him, that he valued nothing in compariſon of the advantages which he had by the knowledg of it.

My deſign at this time, from this Text, is to repreſent the excellency of this knowledg of the Chriſtian Religion, above that of any other Religion or Inſtitution in the world. And here I ſhall not conſider the external evidence which we have of the truth of Chriſtianity, and of the Divinity of its doctrine; in which reſpect, it hath incomparably the advantage of any other Religi-

on;

on: but only the internal excellencies of the Doctrine it ſelf, abſtracting from the Divine authority of it: And that in theſe four reſpects:

Firſt, As it does more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, which is the great foundation of all Religion.

Secondly, As it gives us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives.

Thirdly, As it propounds to us more powerful arguments to perſwade men to the obedience of this Law.

Fourthly, As it furniſhes us with better motives and conſiderations to patience and contentedneſs under the evils and afflictions of this life. Now theſe are the greateſt advantages that any Religion can have, To give men right apprehenſions of God, a perfect rule of good life, and efficatious arguments to perſwade men to be good, and patiently to bear the evils and ſufferings of this life. And theſe ſhall be the heads of my following diſcourſe.

I. The Chriſtian Religion doth more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, than any Religion ever did. And to have right apprehenſions of God, is the great

foundation of all Religion. For according as mens notions of God are, ſuch will their Religion be. If men have groſs and falſe conceptions of God, their Religion will be abſurd and ſuperſtitious. If men fancy God to be an ill-natur'd Being, arm'd with infinite power, one that delights in the miſery and ruin of his creatures, and is ready to take all advantages againſt them, they may fear him, but they will hate him; and they will be apt to be ſuch towards one another, as they fancy God to be towards them; for all Religion doth naturally encline men to imitate him whom they worſhip.

Now the Chriſtian Religion gives us a more perfect, and a more lovely character of God, than any Religion ever did. It repreſents him to us as a pure ſpirit, (which the Heathens did not generally believe) and that he is to be worſhipp'd in ſuch a manner, as is moſt ſutable to his ſpiritual nature, (which not only the Heathens, but even the Jews themſelves were extreamly miſtaken about) *God is a ſpirit* (ſays our Saviour) *and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.* It is true indeed, God himſelf did command ſacrifices to the Jews, and all thoſe external and troubleſome obſervances

vances of which their Religion did consist: But then it is to be consider'd, that he did not institute this way of Worship, because it was most suitable to his own nature, but because of the carnality of their hearts, and the proneness of that people to Idolatry. God did not prescribe these things because they were best, but because the temper of that People would then admit of nothing better. And this the Scripture gives us several intimations of, *Thou desirest not sacrifice, thou delightest not in burnt offerings*, saith *David*: And elsewhere more expressly to this purpose; *I spake not unto your Fathers* (says God by the Prophet *Jeremiah*) *nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice*: a sufficient intimation that God did not primarily intend to appoint this way of worship, and to impose it upon them, as that which was most proper and agreeable to him; but that he condescended to it, as most accommodate to their present state and inclination. And in this sense also some understand what God says to the same people by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that *he gave them statutes that were not good.* Psal 51. 16 Jer. 7. 22. Ezek. 20. 25.

And as the Christian Religion gives a more perfect, so a more amiable and lovely character of the Divine nature. No Religion that ever was in the world, does so fully represent the goodness of God, and his tender love to mankind, which is the best and most powerful argument to the love of God. The Heathens did generally dread God, and looked upon him as fierce, and cruel, and revengful; and therefore they endeavoured to appease him by the horrid and barbarous sacrifices of men, and of their own children. And all along in the *old Testament*, God is generally represented as very strict and severe. But there are no where so plain and full declarations of his mercy and love to the sons of men, as are made in the *Gospel*. In the *old Testament* God is usually styl'd, *the Lord of Hosts, the great and the terrible God*: But in the *new Testament* he is represented to us by milder titles, *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; *the father of mercies, and the God of all consolations*; *the God of all patience*; *the God of love and peace*; nay he is said to be *love* it self, and to *dwell in love*. And this difference between the style of the *old* and *new Testament* is so remarkable, that one of the greatest *Sects* in the Primitive Church

Church (I mean that of the *Gnosticks*) did upon this very ground found their *hereſie* of two Gods; the *one* evil and fierce and cruel, whom they call'd the God of the *old Teſtament*; the *other* good and kind and merciful, whom they call'd the God of the *new*. So great a difference is there between the repreſentations which are made of God in the Books of the Jewiſh and the Chriſtian Religion, as to give, at leaſt ſome colour and pretence for an imagination of two Gods.

II. Chriſtian Religion hath given us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives. It hath made our duty more plain and certain in many inſtances, than either the Philoſophy of the *Heathen*, or the precepts of *Moſes* had done. It commands univerſal love, and kindneſs and good will among men; a readineſs to forgive our greateſt enemies, *to do good to them that hate us, to bleſs them that curſe us, and to pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us*. And does inculcate theſe precepts more vehemently; and forbid malice, and hatred, and revenge, and contention more ſtrictly and peremptorily than any Religion ever did before; as will appear to any one that does but attentively read our

Saviours Sermon upon the Mount.

And us Christianity hath given us a more *certain*, so likewise a more *perfect* Law for the government of our lives. All the precepts of it are reasonable and wise; requiring such duties of us, as are suitable to the light of nature, and do approve themselves to the best reason of mankind; such as have their foundation in the nature of God, and are an imitation of the Divine excellencies; such as tend to the perfection of humane nature, and to raise the minds of men to the highest pitch of goodness and virtue. The Laws of our Religion are such, as are generally useful and beneficial to the world, as do tend to the outward peace and the health, to the inward comfort and contentment, and to the universal happiness of mankind. They command nothing that is unnecessary and burdensom, as were the numerous rites and ceremonies of the Jewish Religion, but what is reasonable, and useful, and substantial: And they omit no thing that may tend to the glory of God, or the welfare of men: Nor do they restrain us in any thing, but what is contrary either to the regular inclinations of nature, or to our reason and true interest. They forbid us nothing, but what is base

base and unworthy, to serve our humours and passions, to reproach our understandings, and to make our selves fools and beasts; in a word, nothing but what tends either to our private harm and prejudice or to publick disorder and confusion.

And that this is the tenour of the Laws of the Gospel, will appear to any one from our *Saviour*'s Sermons and discourses, particularly that upon the Mount; wherein he charges his Disciples and followers to be humble, and meek, and righteous, and merciful, and pure, and peaceable, and patient under sufferings and persecutions, and good and kind to all, even to those that are evil and injurious to us; and to endeavour to excel in all goodness and virtue. This will appear likewise from the Writings of the holy Apostles; I will instance but in some few passages in them, St. *Paul* represents to us the design of the Christian doctrine in a very few words, but of admiral sense and weight; *The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appear'd to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.* The same Apostle makes this the main and fundamental condition of the Covenant

Tit. 2. 11, 12.

of

2 Tim. 2. 19. of the Goſpel on our part, *Let every one that names the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.* St. *James* deſcribes the Chriſtian doctrine (which he calls *the wiſdom that is from above*) by theſe characters, *It is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle and eaſie to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hipocriſie.* 2 Pet. 1. 3, 4. St. *Peter* calls the Goſpel, *the knowledg of him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby* (ſaith he) *are given unto us exceeding great and precious promiſes, that by theſe you might be partakers of a divine nature, having eſcap'd the corruption that is in the world through luſt*; and upon this conſideration he exhorts them *to give all* V. 5, 6, 7. *diligence to add to their faith* the ſeveral virtues of a good life; without which he tells them, *they are barren and unfruitful in the knowledg of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* I will conclude with that full and comprehenſive paſſage of St. *Paul* to the *Philippians, Whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt,* (ὅσα σεμνὰ, whatſoever things are of venerable eſteem) *whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure* (or chaſt) *whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe, think on theſe things.*

But

But the perfection and the reasonableness of the Laws of Christianity will most plainly appear, by taking a brief survey of them. And they may all be referr'd to these two general heads. They are either such as tend to the perfection of humane nature, and to make men singly and personally good; or such as tend to the peace and happiness of humane Society.

First, Such as tend to the perfection of humnane nature, and to make men good singly and personally consider'd. And the precepts of this kind, may be distributed likewise into two sorts; such as enjoyn Piety towards God, or such as require the good order and government of our selves, in respect of the enjoyments and pleasures of this life.

1. Such as enjoyn Piety towards God. All the duties of Christian Religion, which respect God, are no other but what natural light prompts men to; excepting the two Sacraments (which are of great use and significancy in the Christian Religion) and praying to God in the name, and by the mediation of Jesus Christ. For the sum of natural Religion, as it refers more immediately to God, is this; That we should inwardly reverence and

and love God, and that we ſhould expreſs our inward reverence and love of him, by external worſhip and adoration, and by our readineſs to receive and obey all the revelations of his will: And that we ſhould teſtifie our dependance upon him, and our confidence of his goodneſs, by conſtant prayers and ſupplications to him, for mercy and help for our ſelves, and others; And that we ſhould acknowledg our obligations to him, for the many favours and benefits which every day, and every minute we receive from him, by continual praiſes and thankſgivings: And that on the contrary, we ſhould not entertain any unworthy thoughts of God, nor give that honour and reverence which is due to him, to any other; that we ſhould not worſhip him in any manner that is either unſutable to the excellency and perfection of his nature, or contrary to his revealed will; that we ſhould careſully avoid the prophane and irreverent uſe of his Name, by curſing, or cuſtomary ſwearing; and take heed of the neglect or contempt of his Worſhip, or any thing belonging to it. This is the ſum of the firſt part of natural Religion; and theſe are the general heads of thoſe duties which every man's reaſon tells him he owes to God:

God: And these are the very things which the Christian Religion does expresly require of us, as might be evidenc'd from particular Texts in the *New Testament*. So that there is nothing in this part of Christianity, but what agrees very well with the reason of mankind.

2. Such precepts as require the good order and government of our selves, in respect of the pleasures and enjoyments of this life. Christian Religion commands whatsoever things are pure and chast, all manner of sobriety, and temperance, and moderation in reference to our appetites and passions; and forbids whatever is unnatural, and unreasonable, and unhealthful, in the use of pleasures, and of any of God's creatures. Hither belong all those Texts which require of us, that we should *not walk after the flesh, but after the spirit*; that we should *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*; that we should *be holy in all manner of conversation*. St. *John* distributes the lusts and irregular appetites of men into three kinds, voluptuousness, covetousness and ambition, answerably to the three sorts of tempting objects that are in the world, pleasures, riches and honours, *All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes,*

Rom. 8. 1.
2 Cor. 7. 1
1 Pet. 1. 15
1 John 2. 16.

eyes, and the pride of life, &c. And Christianity doth ſtrictly forbid all theſe; *Take*
Luke 12. 15. *heed and beware of Covetouſneſs* (ſays our Saviour, and he adds this excellent reaſon) *for a mans life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth.* It forbids pride and ambition and vain glory, and commands humility and modeſty and condeſcention to others; *Learn of me*
Matt. 11. 29. (ſays our Saviour) *for I am meek and low-*
Rom. 12. 16. *ly in ſpirit; Mind not high things, but con-*
Phil. 2. 3. *deſcend to them that are of low degree; Let nothing be done through vain glory, but in lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem other better than themſelves.* And in reference to ſenſual pleaſures it forbids all irregularity, and exceſs, and ſtrictly enjoyns purity and temperance; cautioning us, *to take*
Luk 21. 36 *heed, leſt we be over-charged with ſurfeiting and drunkenneſs*; charging us, *To walk*
Ro. 13. 13. *decently as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wan-*
1 Pet 2. 11. *tonneſs; To abſtain from fleſhly luſts which war againſt the ſoul.* Now all theſe precepts do not only tend to beget in us ſuch virtues and diſpoſitions, as are reaſonable and ſutable to our nature, and every way for our temporal convenience and advantage; but ſuch, as do likewiſe exceedingly diſpoſe us to piety and

and religion, by purifying our ſouls from the droſs and filth of ſenſual delights. For covetouſneſs debaſeth a man's ſpirit, and ſinks it into the earth; intemperance and luſt cloud a man's underſtanding, and indiſpoſe it for the contemplation of things ſpiritual and divine. Thus you ſee how the precepts of Chriſtianity do tend to the perfection of humane nature, conſidering men ſingly and perſonally.

Secondly, The other ſort of Precepts are ſuch as tend to the peace and happineſs of humane Society. And the reaſon of mankind can deviſe nothing more proper to this end than the Laws of Chriſtianity are. For they command all thoſe virtues which are apt to ſweeten the ſpirits, and allay the paſſions and animoſities of men one towards another. They require us *to love our neighbour* (that is, every man in the world, even our greateſt enemies) *as our ſelves*. And for this end among others, was the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, the Feaſt of love, inſtituted; that by commemorating the love of our dying Saviour, who laid down his life for his enemies, we might be put in mind how we ought to love one another.

And by this Law of loving all men even

even our enemies, Christian Religion discovers it self not only to be the most innocent and harmless, but the most generous and best natur'd Institution that ever was in the world. For in pursuance of this general precept, it commands us, *to do good to all men; if it be possible, and as much as in us lies to live peaceably with all men*; to be *kind one to another*, ready to gratifie and oblige men; to be *tender-hearted* and compassionate towards those that are in want or misery, and ready to supply and relieve them; to sympathize with one another in our joyes and sorrows, *to mourn with those that mourn, and to rejoyce with them that rejoyce; to bear one anothers burdens, and to forbear one another in love*; to be easily reconcil'd to them that have offended us, and to be ready to *forgive from our hearts* the greatest injuries that can be done to us, and that without bounds and limits, *even to seventy seven times*, as our Saviour expresseth it.

The Laws of Christianity do likewise secure both the private interests of men, and the publick peace, by confirming and enforcing all the dictates of nature concerning Justice and Equity, and our doing to others, as we would have them

to

to do to us; and by commanding obedience to humane Laws which decide mens rights, and ſubmiſſion to government, under pain of damnation: And by forbiding whatever is contrary to theſe, violence and oppreſſion, defrauding and overreaching one another, perfidiouſneſs and treachery, breach of truſts, oaths, or promiſes, undutifulneſs to ſuperiors, ſedition and rebellion againſt Magiſtracy and authority; And if there be any thing elſe that is apt to diſturb the peace of the world, and to alienate the affections of men from one another, as ſowrneſs of diſpoſition, and rudeneſs of behaviour, cenſoriouſneſs and ſiniſter interpretation of things, all croſs and diſtaſtful humours, and whatever elſe may render the converſation of men grievous and uneaſie to one another: All theſe are either expreſly, or by clear conſequence and deduction, forbidden in the new Teſtament. And ſee they are in ye old.

And now what could any Religion do more, towards the reforming of the diſpoſitions and manners of men? What Laws can be devis'd more proper and effectual, to advance the nature of man to its higheſt perfection, to procure the tranquility of mens minds, and the peace and happineſs of the world, than theſe preceps of

Christianity are? Several of which (as those, of *loving our enemies*, of *not revenging injuries*, of *rendring good for evil*, &c.) though they have been esteem'd reasonable, by some of the wisest among the Heathen, yet by reason of the degeneracy of the world, and of the obscurity and uncertainty of humane reason, they never obtain'd to have the estimation and force of natural Laws. So that we owe to Christianity the discovery of the most certain and perfect Rule of life that ever the world was acquainted with.

III. Christian Religion propounds the most powerful arguments to perswade men to the obedience of these Laws. The Gospel offers such considerations to us, as are fit to work very forcibly upon two of the most swaying and governing passions in the mind of man, our hopes and our fears. To encourage our hopes, it gives us the highest assurance of the greatest and most lasting happiness, in case of obedience; and to awaken our fear, it threatens sinners with the most dreadful and durable torments, in case of disobedience. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and im-*

immortality, it promiſeth *eternal life: But unto them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs*, it threatens *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh*. And this is that which makes the doctrine of the Goſpel ſo powerful an inſtrument for the reforming of the world, that it propoſes to men ſuch glorious rewards, and ſuch terrible puniſhments, as no Religion ever did; and to make the conſideration of them more effectual, it gives us far greater aſſurance of the reality and certainty of theſe things, than ever the world had before. This account the *Apoſtle* gives us of the ſucceſs and efficacy of the Goſpel upon the minds of men, and for this reaſon he calls it *the power of God unto ſalvation*, beeauſe therein *the wrath of God is reveal'd from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*. Before the revelation of the Goſpel, the wickedneſs and impenitency of the Heathen-world was a much more excuſable thing; becauſe they were in a great meaſure ignorant of the rewards of another life, and had generally but very uncertain and obſcure apprehenſions of thoſe things which urge men moſt powerfully to forſake their ſins, and are the moſt prevalent arguments to a good life. So St. *Paul* tells the *Athe-*

Rom. 1. 16. 18.

nians, the most knowing among the Heathen; *The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent; Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judg the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* The resurrection of *Jesus Christ* from the dead, hath given the world that full assurance of another life after this, and of a future Judgment which it never had before; for *He* whom God rais'd from the dead did declare and testifie, that *it was he who was ordain'd of God, to be the Judg of quick and dead.* And the firm belief of a future Judgment, which shall *render to every man according to his deeds*, if it be well consider'd, is to a reasonable nature the most forcible motive of all other to a good life; because it is taken from the consideration of the greatest and most lasting happiness and misery that humane nature is capable of. So that the Laws of Christianity have the firmest sanction of any Laws in the world, to secure the obedience and observance of them: For what can restrain men from sin, if the terrors of the Lord, and the evident danger of eternal destruction will

Act. 17. 30, 31.

Act. 10. 42.

not?

not? What encouragement can be given to goodneſs, beyond the hopes of Heaven, and the aſſurance of an endleſs felicity?

IV. The Chriſtian Religion furniſheth us with the beſt motives and conſiderations to patience and contentedneſs under the evils and afflictions of this life. This was one great deſign of Philoſophy, to ſupport men under the evils and calamities which this life is incident to, and to fortifie their ſpirits againſt ſufferings. And to this end, the wiſeſt among the Heathens rack'd their wits, and caſt about every way; they advanc'd all ſorts of principles, and manag'd every little argument and conſideration to the utmoſt advantage. And yet after all theſe attempts, they have not been able to give any conſiderable comfort and eaſe to the mind of man, under any of the great evils and preſſures of this life. *The bed is ſhorter than that a man can ſtretch himſelf upon it, and the covering narrower than that a man can wrap himſelf in it.* All the wiſe ſayings and advices, which Philoſophers could muſter up to this purpoſe, have prov'd ineffectual to the common people and the generality of mankind; and have help'd

only to ſupport ſome few ſtout and obſtinate minds, which without the aſſiſtance of Philoſophy would have held up pretty well of themſelves.

Some of the Philoſophers have run ſo far back for arguments of comfort againſt pain, as to call every thing into queſtion, and to *doubt* whether there were any ſuch things as ſenſe or pain. And yet for all that, when any great evil has been upon them, they would *certainly* ſigh and groan as pitifully, and cry out as loud as other men.

Others have ſought to eaſe themſelves of all the evil of affliction, by diſputing ſubtilly againſt it, and pertinaciouſly maintaining that afflictions are no real evils, but only in opinion and imagination; and therefore a wiſe man ought not to be troubl'd at them. But he muſt be a very wiſe man, that can forbear being troubl'd at things that are very troubleſome. And yet thus *Poſſidonius* (as *Tully* tells us) diſtinguiſh'd; he could not deny pain to be *very troubleſome*, but for all that he was reſolved *never to acknowledg it to be an evil.* But ſure it is a very ſlender comfort, that relies upon this nice diſtinction between things being *troubleſome* and being *evils*; when all the evil

of

of affliction lies in the trouble it creates to us. But when the beſt that can be is made of this argument, it is good for nothing but to be thrown away as a ſtupid Paradox, and againſt the common ſenſe of mankind.

Others have endeavoured to delude their trouble by a graver way of reaſoning, *viz.* that theſe things are fatal and neceſſary, and therefore no body ought to be troubled at them; it being in vain to be troubled at that which we cannot help. And yet perhaps it might as reaſonably be ſaid on the other ſide, that this very conſideration, *that a thing cannot be help'd*, is one of the juſteſt cauſes of trouble to a wiſe man. For it were ſome kind of comfort, if theſe evils were to be avoided, becauſe then we might be careful to prevent them another time: but if they be neceſſary, then my trouble is as fatal as the calamity that occaſions it; and though I know it in vain to be troubled for that which I cannot help, yet I cannot chuſe but be afflicted. It was a ſmart reply that *Auguſtus* made, to one that miniſtred this comfort to him, of the fatality of things, *Hoc ipſum eſt* (ſayes he) *quod me male habet*; this was ſo far from giving any caſe to his mind, that *this was the very thing that troubled him.*

Others have try'd to divert and entertain the troubles of other men by pretty and plauſible *ſayings*, ſuch as this, *That if evils are long, they are but light, if ſharp, but ſhort*; and a hundred ſuch like. Now I am apt to imagine, that it is but very ſmall comfort that a plain and ordinary man, lying under a ſharp fit of the Stone for a week together, receives from this fine Sentence. For what pleaſure ſoever men that are at eaſe and leiſure may take in being the Authors of witty ſayings, I doubt it is but poor conſolation that a man under great and ſtinging afflictions finds from them.

The beſt moral argument to patience, in my opinion, is the advantage of patience it ſelf. To bear evils as quietly as we can, is the way to make them lighter and eaſier. But to toſs and fling and to be reſtleſs, is good for nothing but to fret and enrage our pain, to gall our ſores, and to make the burden that is upon us ſit more uneaſie. But this is properly no conſideration of comfort, but an art of managing ourſelves under afflictions ſo as not to make them more grievous than indeed they are.

But now the arguments which Chriſtianity propounds to us are ſuch, as are a juſt and reaſonable encouragement to men to bear

bear ſufferings patiently. Our Religion ſets before us, not the example of a ſtupid *Stoick*, who had by obſtinate principles harden'd himſelf againſt all ſenſe of pain, beyond the common meaſures of humanity; but an example that lies level to all mankind, of a man like our ſelves, that had a tender ſenſe of the leaſt ſuffering, and yet patiently endur'd the greateſt; of *Jeſus the author & finiſher of our faith, who for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God.* Heb. 1 22. God thought it expedient, that the firſt Chriſtians ſhould by great hardſhips and perſecutions be train'd up for glory; and to animate and encourage them hereto, the *Captain of our ſalvation was crown'd by ſufferings.* Heb. 2. 10. Much more ſhould the conſideration of this pattern arm us with patience againſt the common and ordinary calamities of this life; eſpecially if we conſider his example with this advantage, that though his ſufferings were wholly undeſerv'd, and not for himſelf but for us, yet he bore them patiently.

But the main conſideration of all is, the glory which ſhall follow our ſufferings; as the reward of *them*, if they be for God, and his cauſe; and if upon any other innocent account,

2 Cor. 4. 17 count, as a reward of our patience. *Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Christian Religion hath secur'd us, that we shall be infinite gainers by our sufferings. And who would not be content to suffer, upon terms of such advantage? to *pass through many tribulations into the Kingdom of God*, and to endure a short affliction for an endless happiness? The assurance of a future blessedness, is a cordial that will revive our spirits more in the day of adversity, than all the wise sayings and considerations of Philosophy.

These are the arguments which Christianity propounds to us, and they are firm and sound at the bottom; they have strength and substance in them, and are apt to work upon humane nature, and the most ordinary understanding is capable of the force of them. In the strength and virtue of this great example, and in contemplation of this glorious reward, with what resolution and chearfulness, with what courage and patience did vast numbers of all sorts of people in the first Ages of Christianity, not only men, but women, not only those of greater spirit and more generous education, but those of the poorest and lowest condition; not only the learned and the wise, but the

igno-

ignorant and illiterate, encounter all the rage and malice of the world, and embrace torments and death? Had the precepts and counſels of Philoſophy ever any ſuch effect upon the minds of men? I will conclude this with a paſſage in the life of *Lipſius*, who was a great ſtudier and admirer of the *Stoical* Philoſophy. When he lay upon his death-bed, and one of his friends, who came to viſit him, told him, that he needed not uſe arguments to perſwade him to patience under his pains, the Philoſophy which he had ſtudied ſo much would furniſh him with motives enough to that purpoſe; he anſwers him with this ejaculation, *Domine Jeſu, da mihi patientiam Chriſtianam*, *Lord Jeſus, give me Chriſtian patience.* No patience like to that, which the conſiderations of Chriſtianity are apt to work in us.

And now I have, as briefly and plainly as I could, endeavour'd to repreſent to you the excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, both in reſpect of the clear diſcoveries which it makes to us of the nature of God, which is the great foundation of all Religion, and likewiſe in reſpect of the perfection of its Laws, and the power of its arguments to perſwade men, both to obey and ſuffer the will of God. By which you may ſee,

what

what the proper tendency and design of this Religion is; and what the Laws and precepts of it would make men, if they would truly observe them, and live according to them, *viz.* substantially Religious towards God; chast and temperate, patient and contented in reference to themselves, and the dispensations of God's providence towards them; just and honest, kind and peaceable, and good natur'd towards all men. In a word, the Gospel describes God to us, in all respects such a one, as we would wish him to be; gives us such laws, as every man that understands himself would chuse to live by; propounds such arguments to perswade to the obedience of these laws, as no man that wisely loves himself, and hath any tenderness for his own interest and happiness, either in this world or the other, can refuse to be mov'd withall.

And now methinks I may with some confidence challenge any Religion in the world, to shew such a compleat body and collection of holy and reasonable Laws establisht upon such promises and threatnings, as the Gospel contains. And if any man can produce a Religion, that can reasonably pretend to an equal or a greater confirmation than the Gospel hath; a Religion, to Jew or Gentile, as now they are by the Gospell. see the Gospell Has not a more perfect rule of life, But only more perfectly declares and explains the law of nature; which ever was, is, and will be the most perfect Rule of life. Vid: pag. 215.

ligion, the precepts and promiſes and threatnings whereof are calculated to make men wiſer and better, more temperate and more chaſt, more meek and more patient, more kind and more juſt, than the laws and motives of Chriſtianity are apt to make men; if any man can produce ſuch a Religion, I am ready to be of it. Let but any man ſhew me any Book in the world, the doctrines whereof have the ſeal of ſuch miracles, as the doctrine of the Scriptures hath; a Book which contains the heads of our duty ſo perfectly, and without the mixture of any thing that is unreaſonable, or vicious, or any ways unworthy of God; that commands us every thing in reaſon neceſſary to be done, and abridgeth us of no lawful pleaſure without offering us abundant recompence for our preſent ſelf-denial; a Book, the rules whereof, if they were practis'd, would make men more pious and devout, more holy and ſober, more juſt and fair in their dealings; better friends and better neighbours, better magiſtrates and better ſubjects, and better in all relations; and which does offer to the underſtanding of men more powerful arguments to perſwade them to be all this; let any man, I ſay, ſhew me ſuch a Book, and

I will

I will lay aſide the Scripture, and preach out of *that*.

And do we not all profeſs to be of this excellent Religion, and to ſtudy and believe this holy Book of the Scriptures? But alas! who will believe that we do ſo, that ſhall look upon the actions and conſider the lives of the greateſt part of Chriſtians? How groſly and openly do many of us contradict the plain precepts of the Goſpel, by our ungodlineſs and worldly luſts; by living intemperately or unjuſtly, or prophanely in this preſent world? As if *the grace of God which brings ſalvation*, had never *appear'd* to us; as if we had never heard of Heaven or Hell, or believ'd not one word that the Scripture ſays concerning them, as if we were in no expectation *of the bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; whom God hath *appointed to judg the world in righteouſneſs*, and who will beſtow mighty rewards upon thoſe who faithfully ſerve him, but will come *in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*.

Let us not then deceive our ſelves, by pretending to this *excellent knowledg of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*, if we do not frame our

our lives according to it. For though we *know these things* never so well, yet we are not *happy* unless *we do them:* Nay, we are but the more miserable for knowing them, if we do them not: Therefore it concerns every one of us, to consider seriously that we believe; and whether our belief of the Christian Religion have its due effect upon our lives. If not, all the Precepts, and Promises, and Threatnings of the Gospel will rise up in judgment against us, and the Articles of our Faith will be so many Articles of Accusation; and the great weight of our charge will be this, that we did not obey that Gospel which we profess'd to believe; that we made confession of the Christian Faith, but liv'd like Heathens. Not to believe the Christian Religion, after so great evidence and confirmation as God hath given to it, is very unreasonable; but to believe it to be true, and yet to live as if it were false, is the greatest repugnancy and contradiction that can be. He that does not believe Christianity, either hath, or thinks he hath some reason for withholding his assent from it. But he that believes it, and yet lives contrary to it, knows that he hath no reason for what he does, and is convinced that he

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ought to do otherwiſe: And he is a miſerable man indeed, that does thoſe things for the doing of which he continually ſtands condemn'd by his own mind. And accordingly, God will deal more ſeverely with ſuch perſons. He will pardon a thouſand defects in our underſtandings; if they do not proceed from groſs careleſneſs and neglect of our ſelves; but the faults of our wills have no excuſe, becauſe we knew to do better, and were convinc'd in our minds that we ought not to have done ſo.

Doſt thou believe, that *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*, and doſt thou ſtill allow thy ſelf *in ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*? Art thou convinc'd that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, and doſt thou ſtill perſiſt in a wicked courſe? Art thou fully perſwaded that *no whoremonger, nor adulterer, nor covetous, nor unrighteous perſon, ſhall have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God and Chriſt*, and doſt thou for all that continue to practice theſe vices? What canſt thou ſay (*man*) why it ſhould not be to thee according to thy faith? If it ſo fall out that thou art miſerable and undone for ever, thou haſt no reaſon to be ſurpriz'd

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as if ſome unexpected thing had happen'd to thee. It is but with thee juſt as thou believ'dſt it would be, when thou didſt theſe things. For how couldſt thou expect that God ſhould accept of thy good belief, when thou didſt ſo notoriouſly contradict it by a bad life? How couldſt thou look for other, but that God ſhould condemn thee for the doing of thoſe things, for which thine own Conſcience did condemn thee, all the while thou waſt doing of them? When we come into the other world, there is no conſideration that will ſting our conſciences more cruelly than this, that we did wickedly, when we knew to have done better; and choſe to make our ſelves miſerable, when we underſtood the way to have been happy. To conclude, we Chriſtians have certainly the beſt and the holieſt, the wiſeſt and moſt reaſonable Religion in the world: But then, we are in the worſt condition of all mankind, if the beſt Religion in the world do not make us good.

1 JOHN 5. 3.

—And his commandments are not grievous.

ONE of the great prejudices, which men have entertain'd againſt the Chriſtian Religion, is this, that it lays upon men *heavy burdens, and grievous to be born*, that the Laws of it are very ſtrict and ſevere, difficult to be kept, and yet dangerous to be broken; That it requires us to govern and keep under our paſſions, and to contradict many times our ſtrongeſt inclinations and deſires; *to cut off our right hand*, and *to pluck out our right eye*, to *love our enemies*, to *bleſs them that curſe us*, to *do good to them that hate us*, and to *pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us*; to forgive the greateſt injuries

that are done to us, and to make reparation for the leaſt that we do to others; to be contented with our condition, patient under ſufferings, and ready to ſacrifice our deareſt intereſts in this world, and even our very lives, in the cauſe of God and Religion: All theſe ſeem to be *hard ſayings*, and *grievous commandments*.

For the removal of this prejudice, I have choſen theſe words of the Apoſtle, which expreſly tells us the contrary, *viz.* that *the commandments of God are not grievous*.

And though this be a great truth, if it be impartially conſider'd, yet it is alſo a great paradox to men of corrupt minds, and vicious practices; who are prejudic'd againſt Religion and the holy Laws of God, by their intereſt and their luſts. This ſeems a ſtrange *propoſition* to thoſe, who look upon Religion at a diſtance, and never try'd the experiment of a holy life; who meaſure the Laws of God, not by the intrinſecal goodneſs and equity of them, but by the reluctancy and oppoſition which they find in their own hearts againſt them.

Upon this account, it will be requiſite to take ſome pains, to ſatisfie the reaſon of men concerning this truth; and if it be poſſible,

ſible, to make it ſo evident, that thoſe who are unwilling to own it, may yet be aſham'd to deny it. And methinks I have this peculiar advantage in the argument I have now undertaken, that every reaſonable man cannot chuſe but wiſh me ſucceſs in this attempt; becauſe I undertake the proof of that which it is every man's intereſt that it ſhould be true: And if I can make it out, this pretence againſt Religion will not only be baffled, but we ſhall gain a new and forcible argument to perſwade men over to it.

Now the eaſineſs or difficulty of the obſervation of any Laws or commands, depends chiefly upon theſe *three* things.

Firſt, Upon the Nature of the Laws themſelves, and their ſutableneſs or unſutableneſs to thoſe to whom they are given.

Secondly, Upon the ability or weakneſs of thoſe, on whom theſe Laws are impos'd, for the keeping of them. For eaſineſs and difficulty are relative terms, and refer to ſome power; and a thing may be difficult to a weak man, which yet may be eaſie to the ſame perſon, when aſſiſted with a greater ſtrength.

Thirdly, Upon the encouragement that

is given to the obſervation of them. For the propoſal of great rewards, does very much qualifie and allay the difficulty of any undertaking.

Now if I can make theſe three things evident: 1. That the Laws of God are reaſonable, that is, ſutable to our nature, and advantageous to our intereſt. 2. That we are not deſtitute of ſufficient power and ability, for the performance of them. And, 3. That we have the greateſt encouragements to this purpoſe: Then have we all imaginable reaſon to aſſent to the truth of this Propoſition, that *the commandments of God are not grievous.*

I. The Laws of God are reaſonable, that is, ſutable to our nature, and advantageous to our intereſt. 'Tis true, God hath a ſoveraign right over us, as we are his creatures; and by virtue of this right, he might without injuſtice have impos'd difficult tasks upon us, and have requir'd hard things at our hands. But in making Laws for us, he hath not made uſe of this right. He hath commanded us nothing in the Goſpel, that is either unſutable to our reaſon, or prejudicial to our intereſt; nay, nothing that is ſevere and againſt the grain of our nature; but when either the appa-

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rent neceſſity of our intereſt does require it, or an extraordinary reward is promis'd to our obedience. *He hath ſhew'd thee, O man what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*? This is the ſum of the natural Law; that we ſhould behave our ſelves reverently and obediently towards the Divine Majeſty, and juſtly and charitably towards men; and that in order to the fiting of us for the better diſcharge of theſe duties, we ſhould govern our ſelves in the uſe of ſenſual delights with temperance and moderation. And if we go over the Laws of Chriſtianity; we ſhall find that (excepting a very few particulars) they enjoyn the very ſame things; only they have made our duty more clear and certain. But this I have had occaſion to make out largely in the foregoing *diſcourſe*, and therefore I ſhall ſay the leſs to it now. *Ibid. pag. 104 pag. 218.*

As to the ſeveral parts of God's worſhip and ſervice, *prayer* and *thankſgiving*, *hearing* and *reading* the *Word of God*, and *receiving* of the *Sacrament*; theſe are all no leſs for our own comfort and advantage, than for the honour of God and Religion. And there is nothing of difficulty

or trouble in the external performance of them, but what hypocrisie can make tolerable to it self: And certainly they must be not only much more easie, but even delightful, when they are directed by our understandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections.

As for those Laws of Religion which concern our duty to our selves, as *temperance* and *chastity*; or to others, as the several branches of *justice* and *charity*, comprehended in those general rules, *of loving our neighbour as our selves*, and *of doing to others as we would have them to do to us*: There is nothing in all these Laws, but what is most reasonable and fit to be done by us; nothing, but what if we were to consult our own interest and happiness, and did rightly understand our selves, we would chuse for our selves; nothing, but what is easie to be understood, and as easie to be practis'd by an honest and a willing mind.

Now the practice of all these is suitable to our nature, and agreeable to the frame of our understandings; proper to our condition and circumstances in this world, and preparatory to our happiness in the next. And no man's reason did ever dictate to him the contrary of any of these; that it is

fit

fit for a Creature not to love God, to be undutiful to his great Soveraign, and ungrateful to his beſt benefactor; that it is reaſonable for a man to debauch himſelf by intemperance, and brutiſh ſenſuality; to hate, defraud and oppreſs other men. Our very natural reaſon, if we will but liſten to the dictates of it, is an enemy to all theſe ſins, and a law againſt all theſe vices.

And as the practice of all piety and virtue is agreeable to our reaſon, ſo is it likewiſe for the intereſt of mankind; both of private perſons, and of publick Societies, as I have already ſhown, Some virtues plainly tend to the preſervation of our health, others to the improvement and ſecurity of our eſtates, all to the peace and quiet of our minds; and which is ſomewhat more ſtrange, to the advancement of our eſteem and reputation; for though the world be generally bad, and men are apt to improve nothing ſo much as what they do themſelves; yet, I know not how it comes to paſs, that men are commonly ſo juſt to virtue and goodneſs, as to praiſe it in others, even when they do not practiſe it themſelves.

The law of reason (or natural law) requires all this duty.

And as for thoſe precepts of Chriſtianity, which ſeem to be moſt harſh and difficult

cult at first appearance, (as *repentance* and *restitution*, *mortification* of our *lusts* and *passions*, *humility*, *patience* and *contentedness* with our condition, and *resignation* of our selves to the will of God; *forgiving and loving our enemies*, and *self-denial* for the cause of God and Religion) if we look well into them, and consider thoroughly the nature and tendency of them, even these will appear to be both reasonable in themselves, and upon one account or other, really for our advantage.

What more reasonable than *repentance*, than that a man when he hath done amiss and contrary to his duty, should be heartily sorry for it, and resolve to do so no more? And how grievous soever it be, it is necessary, being the only way to pardon and peace. And in case our offence against God hath been complicated with injury to men, it is but reasonable we should make *restitution*, as far as we are able, according to the nature of the injury. For without this our repentance is not real, because we have not done what we can to undo our fault, as much as we can; or at least to hinder the injurious consequences of it from proceeding any further: Nor can any man be judg'd

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to be truly ſorry for his ſin, that retains the profit and advantages of it to himſelf. Beſides that, till reparation be made to the utmoſt of our power, we can have no peace in our own conſciences, nor any well-grounded hopes of forgiveneſs from God.

Mortification of our luſts and paſſions, though, like *repentance*, it have ſomething in it that is troubleſom, yet nothing that is unreaſonable, or really to our prejudice. If we give way to our Paſſions, we do but gratifie our ſelves for the preſent in order to our future diſquiet; but if we reſiſt and conquer them, we lay the foundation of perpetual peace and tranquillity in our minds. If we govern our ſelves in the uſe of ſenſual delights by the Laws of God and reaſon, we ſhall find our ſelves more at eaſe, then if we ſhould let looſe the reins to our appetites and luſts. For the more we gratifie our luſts, the more craving they will be, and the more impatient of denial. *Creſcit indulgens ſibi dirus hydrops*; Every luſt is a kind of dydropick diſtemper, and the more we drink, the more we ſhall thirſt. So that by retrenching our inordinate deſires, we do not rob our ſelves of any true pleaſure, but only prevent the pain and trouble of further diſſatisfaction.

Humi-

Humility, though it may ſeem to expoſe a man to ſome contempt, yet it is truly the readieſt way to honour: As on the contrary, *pride* is a moſt improper and abſurd means for the accompliſhing of the end it aims at. All other vices do in ſome meaſure attain their end; Covetouſneſs does uſually raiſe an eſtate, and ambitious endeavours do often advance men to high places: But pride and inſolence, and contempt of others, do infallibly defeat their own deſign. They aim at reſpect & eſteem, but never attain it; for all mankind do naturally hate and ſlight a proud man.

What more reaſonable than *patience* and *contentedneſs*, and that we ſhould in all things *reſign* up our ſelves to the will of God, who loves us as well as we do our ſelves, and knows what is good for us better than we do our ſelves? this certainly is the beſt way to prevent anxiety and perplexity of mind, and to make the worſt condition as tolerable as it can be, and much more eaſie than it would be otherwiſe.

As for that peculiar *Law* of Chriſtianity, which forbids *revenge*, and commands us to *forgive injuries*, and to *love our enemies*; no man can think it grievous, who conſiders the pleaſure and ſweetneſs of love, and the glorious victory of over-

coming evil with good; and then compares these, with the restless torment, and perpetual tumults of a malicious and revengeful spirit.

And lastly, *Self-denial, for the cause of God and Religion*; this is neither unreasonable, nor to our disadvantage. If we consider our infinite obligations to God, we have no reason to think much to sacrifice to him our dearest interests in this world; especially if we consider withall, how disproportionably great the reward of our sufferings shall be in another world. Besides that the interest of Religion is of so great concernment to the happiness of mankind, that every man is bound for that reason, to assert the truth of it, with the hazard of any thing that is most valuable to him in this world.

II. We are not destitute of sufficient power and strength for the performing of God's commands. Had God given us Laws, but no power to keep them, his commandments would then indeed have been grievous. 'Tis true, we have contracted a great deal of weakness and impotency, by our wilfull degeneracy from goodness; but that grace, which the Gospel offers to us for our assistance, is sufficient for us. And this seems to be the particular

ticular reason why the Apostle says here in the *Text*, that *his commandments are not grievous*; because he offers us an assistance proportionable to the difficulty of his commands, and the necessity of our condition: For it follows immediately after the *Text*, *for whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world.* Therefore the *commandments* of God *are not grievous*, because every child of God, *that is*, every Christian, is endued with a power, whereby he is enabled to resist and conquer the temptations of the world. The same Apostle elsewhere encourages Christians upon the same consideration, *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Though we be encompass'd with many and potent enemies, who make it their business to tempt and to deter us from our duty; yet our case is not hard, so long as we have a greater strength on our side: And this, the Apostle tells us, is the case of every Christian; *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Are there legions of Devils who are continually designing and working our ruine? There are also myriads of good Angels who are more chearful and officious to do us good. For I doubt not, but as those who are bent to do wickedly, will never want

1. Joh. 5. 4.

1 Joh. 4. 4.

want tempters to urge them on, and to push them forward in an evil course; so on the other hand, those who apply themselves seriously to the business of Religion, and yield themselves tractable to good motions, will find the good Spirit of God more ready and active to encourage them, than the Devil can be to pull them back; unless we think, that God hath given a greater power, and a larger commission to the Devil to do men mischief, than to his holy Spirit and his holy Angels for our assistance and encouragement. But then we are to understand, that this assistance is only offer'd to men, and not forc'd upon them whether they will or no. For if we beg God's grace, and neglect to make use of it; if we implore his assistance for the mortifying of our lusts, but will not contribute our own endeavours, God will withdraw his grace, and take away his holy Spirit from us. Nay, if after we have begun well, we do not notoriously slacken our endeavours, we forfeit the Divine assistance: If when, by God's grace, we have in a good measure conquer'd the first difficulties of Religion, and gain'd some habitual strength against sin; if after this we grow careless and remiss, and neglect our guard, and lay our selves open to temptations

But how can we to yeild, and be tractable? it is ye worke of ye spirit, and ye grace of God only wth makes us [illegible] Act. 16. 14. Phil. 2. 13.

[illegible] Phil. 2. 13. Joh. 6. 44. 65.

X. But if we do not actually conquer (and not in a measure only) how are these [illegible] Joh. 17. 3. Joh. 6. 47. Joh. 10. 28. Joh. 3. 14. 15. ex hac doctrina voluntas nostra gratiam oblatam [illegible], et admissam abjiciat.

tions, God's Spirit will not alwaies ſtrive with us: Notwithſtanding all the promiſes of the Goſpel, and the mighty aſſiſtances there offer'd to us, if we love any luſt, and will with *Sampſon* lay our head in *Dalilah*'s lap, we ſhall be inſenſibly robb'd *of our ſtrength, and become like other men.*

III. We have the greateſt encouragement to the obſervance of God's commands. Two things make any courſe of life eaſie; preſent pleaſure, and the aſſurance of a future reward. Religion gives part of its reward in hand, the preſent comfort and ſatisfaction of having done our duty; and for the reſt, it offers us the beſt ſecurity that Heaven can give. Now theſe two muſt needs make our duty very eaſie; a conſiderable reward in hand; and not only the hopes, but the aſſurance of a far greater recompence hereafter.

1. Preſent peace and ſatisfaction of mind; and unexpreſſible joy and pleaſure flowing from the teſtimony of a good conſcience. This is preſent payment, beſides that it is the earneſt of a future and greater happineſs. And this does naturally ſpring up in the mind of a good man; *great peace*

peace have all they that love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them. All acts of piety and virtue are not only delightful for the preſent, but they leave peace and contentment behind them: A peace that no outward violence can interrupt, or take from us. The pleaſures of a holy life have moreover this peculiar advantage of all worldly joyes, that we ſhall never be weary of them; we cannot be cloy'd by the frequent repetition of theſe pleaſures, nor by the long enjoyment of them. I know that ſome vices pretend to bring great pleaſure along with them, and that the delights of a ſenſual and voluptuous life make a glorious ſhow, and are attended with much pomp and noiſe, like the ſports of children and fools which are loud and clamorous; or, as *Solomon* elegantly compares them, *like the crackling of thorns under a pot*, which makes a little noiſe and a ſudden blaze, that is preſently over. But the ſerious and the manly pleaſures, the ſolid and ſubſtantial joys, are only to be found in the waies of Religion and virtue. The moſt ſenſual man that ever was in the world, never felt his heart touch'd with ſo delicious and laſting a pleaſure as that is, which ſprings from a clear conſcience, and a mind fully ſatisfied with its own actions.

2. But the great encouragement of all, is the assurance of a future reward. The firm perswasion whereof is enough to raise us above any thing in this world; and to animate us with courage and resolution against the greatest difficulties. So the *Apostle* reasons: *His commandments are not grievous: For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* The belief of a future happiness and glory, was that which made the primitive Christians so victorious over the world, and gave them the courage to resist all the pleasures and terrors of sense. It cannot be deny'd, but that a religious course of life is liable to be incumbred with many difficulties, which are naturally grievous to flesh and blood. But a Christian is able to comfort himself under all these, with the thoughts of his end, which is *everlasting life.* He considers the goodness of God, which he believes would not deny him the free enjoyment of the things of this world, were it not that he hath such joys and pleasures in store for him, as will abundantly recompence his present self-denial and sufferings.

Let us now put both these together, the *pleasures* of Religion, and the *rewards* of it; and they cannot but appear to be a mighty

mighty encouragement. With what pleasure does a man that lives a holy and a virtuous life, despise the pleasures of sin; and notwithstanding all the allurements of sense, persist resolutely in his course? And how is such a man confirm'd in his purpose, and animated in his holy resolution, when he finds that God and his own conscience do applaud his choice; when all along in the course of Religion and a virtuous life, in his conflicts with sin, and resistance of temptations, he hath for his present reward the two great pleasures of innocence and of victory, and for his future encouragement the joyful hopes of a Crown and a Kingdom? A recompence so great, as is sufficient to make a lame man walk, enough to make any one willing to offer violence to his strongest passions and inclinations. A man would be content to strive with himself, and to conflict with great difficulties, in hopes of a mighty reward. What poor man would not cheerfully carry a great burden of gold and silver, that were assur'd to have the greatest share of it for his pains, and thereby to be made a man for ever? What ever difficulties Religion is attended withal, they are all sweeten'd and made easy by the proposal of a great and eternal reward.

But are there no difficulties then in Religion? Is every thing ſo plain and eaſie? Are all the waies of virtue ſo ſmooth and even, as we have here repreſented them? Hath not our *Saviour* told us, that *ſtraight is the gate, and narrow is the way* Mat. 7. 14. *that leads to life, and few there be that find it*? Does not the *Apoſtle* ſay, that *through* Act. 14. 22 *much tribulation we muſt enter into the Kingdom of God*: And, *that all that will* 2 Tim. 3. 12. *live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, ſhall ſuffer perſecution*? And does not the *Scripture* every where ſpeak, of *ſtriving*, and *wreſtling*, and *running*, and *fighting*; of *labouring*, and *watching*, and *giving all diligence*? And is there nothing grievous in all this?

This is a very material objection, and therefore I ſhall be the more careful to give a ſatisfactory anſwer to it. And that I may do it the more diſtinctly, be pleas'd to conſider theſe *ſix* things. 1. That the ſuffering of perſecution for Religion is an extraordinary caſe, which did chiefly concern the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity. 2. That this diſcourſe, concerning the eaſineſs of God's commands, does all along ſuppoſe and acknowledg the difficulties of the entrance upon a Religious courſe. 3. Nor is there any reaſon it ſhould exclude our after

ter care and diligence. 4. All the difficulties of Religion are very much mitigated and allayed by hope and by love. 5. There is incomparably more difficulty and trouble in the waies of ſin and vice, than in the waies of Religion and virtue. 6. If we do but put virtue and vice, a religious and a wicked courſe of life in equal circumſtances; if we will but ſuppoſe a man as much accuſtom'd and inur'd to the one, as he has been to the other; then I ſhall not doubt to pronounce, that the advantages of eaſe and pleaſure will be found to be on the ſide of Religion.

I. The ſuffering of perſecution for Religion is an extraordinary caſe, and did chiefly concern the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity. And therefore the general ſayings of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, concerning the perſecuted ſtate of Chriſtians, are to be limited (as doubtleſs they were intended) principally to thoſe firſt times; and by no means to be equally extended to all Ages of the Church. At firſt indeed, whoever embrac'd the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, did thereby expoſe themſelves to all the ſufferings which the power and malice of the world could afflict them withall: But ſince *the Kingdoms of the Earth became the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Chriſt*, and the Governours of

the world began to be Patrons of the Church, 'tis so far from being universally true, that every Christian hath suffer'd the violence of persecution, that it hath been a rare case, and happen'd only in some few ages, and to some persons. So that this is accidental to a state of Religion, and therefore ought not to be reckon'd among the ordinary difficulties of it. And when it happens, God gives extraordinary supports, and promises mighty rewards, to make it tolerable.

II. This discourse concerning the easiness of Gods commands, does all along suppose and acknowledg the difficulties of the first entrance upon a religious course, except only in those persons, who have had the happiness to be train'd up to Religion, by the easy and insensible degrees of a pious and virtuous education. These indeed are freed from a great deal of pains and difficulty, which others, who are reclaim'd from a bad course of life, must expect to undergo. They are, in a great measure, excused from the pangs of the new birth, from the pains of a sudden and violent change, from the terrors of an affrighted mind, and from the deep and piercing sorrows of a more solemn repentance. Whereas those who have lived wickedly before, must look to meet with

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a great deal more trouble, becauſe they are put upon changing the whole courſe of their life at once, and muſt contend with inveterate habits, and offer no ſmall violence to themſelves in plucking up thoſe vices, which have been rooted in them by long cuſtom and continuance. This indeed is grievous, and muſt needs be ſenſibly painful, like the *plucking out of a right eye*, or the *cutting off a right hand*: For in this caſe, a man muſt ſtrive againſt the very bent and inclination of his ſtrongeſt appetites, againſt the tyranny of cuſtom, and the mighty power of a ſecond nature. But this is no juſt reflection upon Religion; becauſe this does not proceed from the nature of God's laws, but from an accidental indiſpoſition in our ſelves, which Religion is apt to remove: And if we will but allow ſome time of trouble and uneaſineſs for the cure, when that is once wrought, the commands of God will be more eaſy and delightful to us, than ever our ſins and luſts were.

III. Nor does this exclude our after care and diligence. For when the *Apoſtle* ſays, that *the commandments of God are not grievous*, he does by no means intend to inſinuate, that they are calculated for ſlothful and lazy perſons; that they are ſo eaſy, as to require no induſtry and endea-

your on our part; he only aims to prevent a tacit objection, which lies at the bottom of many mens hearts; as if Religion were a moſt grievous and intolerable burden, and there were more trouble, and leſs pleaſure in it, than in any other action of humane life. This he utterly denies, but does not hereby intend to exclude ſuch diligence and induſtry as men uſe about other matters. And if I ſhould tell you, that the buſineſs of Religion does not require a very vigorous proſecution, and great earneſtneſs of endeavour, I ſhould ſpeak quite beſides the holy *Scriptures*, which ſo frequently command *ſeeking* and *ſtriving* and *labouring*, beſides many other ſuch *phraſes* that import diligence and earneſtneſs. And indeed it were unfit that ſo excellent and glorious a reward as the *Goſpel* promiſes, ſhould ſtoop down like fruit upon a full-laden bough, to be pluck'd by every idle and wanton hand; that Heaven ſhould be proſtituted to the lazy deſires and faint wiſhes, to the cheap and ordinary endeavours of ſlothful men. God will not ſo much diſparage eternal life and happineſs, as to beſtow it upon thoſe who have conceiv'd ſo low an opinion of it, as not to think it worth the labouring for. And ſurely this is ſufficient to recommend Religion to any con-

conſiderate man, if the advantages of it be much greater than of any worldly deſign that we can propound to our ſelves, and the difficulties of it not greater. If the ſame ſeriouſneſs and induſtry of endeavour, which men commonly uſe to raiſe a fortune, and advance themſelves in the world, will ſerve to make a man a good man, and to bring him to Heaven, what reaſon hath any man to complain of the hard terms of Religion? And I think I may truly ſay, that uſually leſs than this does it. For God conſiders our condition in this world, and the preſſing neceſſities of this life; that we are fleſh as well as ſpirit, and that we have great need of theſe things; and therefore he allows us, to be very ſedulous and induſtrious about them. However, this I am ſure of, that if men would be as ſerious to ſave their immortal ſouls, as they are to ſupport theſe dying bodies; if they would but provide for eternity, with the ſame ſollicitude and real care, as they do for this life; if they would but ſeek Heaven, with the ſame ardour of affection, and vigour of proſecution, as they ſeek earthly things: If they would but love God, as much as many men do the World, and mind godlineſs as much as men uſually do gain: If they would but go to Church with as good a will, as

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men ordinarily do to their Markets and Fairs; and be in as good earneſt at their devotions, as men commonly are in driving a bargain; if they would but endure ſome troubles and inconveniences in the waies of Religion, with the ſame patience and conſtancy, as they can do ſtorms, and ſoul waies, and miſchances, when they are travelling about their worldly occaſions: If they would but avoid bad company, as men uſe to do cheaters, and reject the temptations of the Devil and the world, as they would do the kind words and inſinuations of a man whom they verily believe to have a deſign to over-reach them; I am confident, that ſuch a one could not fail of Heaven, and would be much ſurer of it, upon theſe terms, than any man, that doth all the other things could be of getting an eſtate, or of attaining any thing in this world.

And cannot every man do thus much? All that I have ſaid ſignifies no more, but that men ſhould uſe their ſincere endeavours: And this ſurely every man can do. For to uſe our ſincere endeavours is nothing elſe, but to do as much as we can; and it is non-ſenſe for any man to deny, that he can do as much as he can. And if we would do thus much, we are ſure of God's

God's grace and assistance, which is never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men. But men expect that Religion should cost them no pains, that happiness should drop into their laps, without any design and endeavour on their part; and that after they have done what they please while they live, God should snatch them up to Heaven when they dye. But though *the commandments of God be not grievous*, yet it is fit to let men know, that they are not thus easie.

IV. All the difficulties of Religion are very much allay'd and sweeten'd by *hope* and by *love*. By the *hopes* of a mighty reward; so great, as is enough to raise us above our selves, and to make us break through all difficulties and discouragements: And by the *love* of God, who hath taken all imaginable waies to endear himself to us. He gave us our beings; and when we were fallen from that happiness to which at first we were design'd, he was pleased to restore us to a new capacity of it, by sending his only Son into the world to dye for us. So that if we have any sense of kindness, we cannot but love Him who hath done so much to oblige us: and if we love him entirely, nothing that he commands will be grievous to us; nay, so far from that, that the greatest pleasure we are capable of will be to please him. For nothing

thing is difficult to love. It will make a man deny himſelf, and croſs his own inclinations to pleaſure them whom he loves. It is a paſſion of a ſtrange power where it reigns, and will cauſe a man to ſubmit to thoſe things with delight, which in other circumſtances would ſeem grievous to him. *Jacob* ſerv'd for *Rachel ſeven years*, and after that *ſeven years more; and they ſeemed unto him but a few daies, for the love he had to her.* Did but the love of God rule in our hearts, and had we as real an affection for him, as ſome men have for their friends, there are no ſuch difficulties in Religion but what love would conquer; and the ſevereſt parts of it would become eaſie, when they were once undertaken by a willing mind.

V. There is incomparably more trouble in the waies of ſin and vice, than in thoſe of Religion and Virtue. Every notorious ſin is naturally attended with ſome inconvenience of harm, or danger, or diſgrace; which the ſinner ſeldom conſiders till the ſin be committed; and then he is in a labyrinth, and in ſeeking the way out of a preſent inconvenience, he intangles himſelf in more. He is glad to make uſe of indirect arts and labours in crafts, to avoid the conſequence of his faults; and many times is fain to cover one ſin with another, and the more he ſtrives to diſentangle himſelf, the more is he

he *ſnar'd in the work of his own hands.* Into what perplexities did *David*'s ſin bring him? ſuch as by all his power and arts he could not free himſelf from: He was glad to commit a greater crime, to avoid the ſhame of a leſs; and could find no other way to conceal his adultery, but by plunging himſelf into the guilt of murder. And thus it is proportionably in all other vices. The ways of ſin are *crooked paths*, full of windings and turnings; but *the way of holineſs* and virtue is a *high way*, and lies ſo plain before us that *wayfaring men, though fools, ſhall not err therein.* There needs no skill to keep a mans ſelf true and honeſt; if we will but reſolve to deal juſtly, and to *ſpeak the truth to our neighbour*, nothing in the whole world is eaſier: For there is nothing of artifice and reach required, to enable a man to ſpeak as he thinks, and to do to others as he would be dealt withall himſelf. Iſa. 35 8.

And as the ways of ſin are full of intricacy and perplexities, ſo likewiſe of trouble and diſquiet. There is no man that wilfully commits any ſin, but his conſcience ſmites him for it, and his guilty mind is frequently gall'd with the remembrance of it: but the reflection upon honeſt and virtuous actions, hath nothing of regret and diſquiet in it. No mans conſcience ever troubled him, for not being diſhoneſt; no mans reaſon

reaſon ever challeng'd him, for not being drunk; no man ever broke his ſleep, or was haunted with fears of divine vengeance becauſe he was conſcious to himſelf that he had *liv'd ſoberly, & righteouſly, and godly in the world.* But with the ungodly it is not ſo. There is no man that is knowingly wicked but he is guilty to himſelf; and there is no man that carries guilt about him, but he hath received a ſting into his ſoul, which makes him reſtleſs, ſo that he can never have any perfect eaſe and pleaſure in his mind.

I might have deſcended to particular Inſtances, and have ſhewn how much more troubleſom the practice of every ſin and vice is, than the exerciſe of the contrary grace and virtue; but that would be too large a ſubject to be brought within the limits of a ſingle diſcourſe.

VI. Let but virtue and vice, a religious and wicked courſe of life be put in equal circumſtances; do but ſuppoſe a man to be as much accuſtom'd and inur'd to the one, as he has been to the other; and then I doubt not but the advantages of eaſe and pleaſure will be found to be on the ſide of Religion. And if we do not put the caſe thus, we make an unequal compariſon. For there is no man but when he firſt begins a wicked courſe, feels a great deal of regret in his mind; the terrours of his conſcience

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and the fears of damnation are very troublesom to him. It is possible, that by degrees a man may harden his conscience, and by a long custom of sinning may in a great measure wear off that tender sense of good and evil, which makes sin so uneasie. But then if in the practice of a holy life, a man may by the same degrees arrive to far greater peace and tranquillity of mind, than ever any wicked man found in a sinful course; if by custom, virtue will come to be more pleasant, than ever vice was; then the advantage is plainly on the side of Religion. And this is truly the case. It is troublesom at first for a man to begin any new course, and to do contrary to what he hath been accustom'd to; but let a man but habituate himself to a religious and virtuous life, and the trouble will go off by degrees, and unspeakable pleasure succeed in the room of it. It is an excellent rule which *Pythagoras* gave to his scholars, *optimum vitæ genus eligito, nam consuetudo faciet jucundissimum*; *pitch upon the best course of life*, resolve alwaies to do that which is most reasonable and virtuous, *and custom will soon render it the most easie*. There is nothing of difficulty in a good life, but what may be conquer'd by custom, as well as the difficulties of any other course, and when a man is once us'd to it, the pleasure of it will be greater than of any other course.

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Let no man then decline or forſake Religion, for the pretended difficulties of it; and lay aſide all cares of God's commandments upon this ſuggeſtion, that they are impoſſible to be kept. For you ſee they are not only poſſible, but eaſie. And thoſe, who upon pretence of the trouble and difficulties of Religion abandon themſelves to a wicked courſe of life, may eaſily be convinc'd, that they take more pains to make themſelves miſerable, than would ſerve to bring them to happineſs. There is no man that is a ſervant of ſin, & a ſlave to any baſe luſt, but might if he pleas'd, get to Heaven with leſs trouble than he goes to Hell.

So that, upon conſideration of the whole matter, there is no reaſon why any man ſhould be deterr'd from a holy and virtuous life, for fear of the labour and pains of it. Becauſe every one that is wicked, takes more pains in another way, and is more induſtrious, only to a worſe purpoſe. Now he that can travel in deep and foul waies, ought not to ſay that he cannot walk in fair. He that ventures to run upon a precipice, when every ſtep he takes is with the danger of his life and his ſoul, ought not to pretend any thing againſt the plain and ſafe paths of Religion, which will entertain us with pleaſure all long in the way, and crown us with happineſs at the end.

2 TIM. ij. 19.

Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.

THE whole verſe runs thus: *Nevertheleſs the foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this ſeal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: And, Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity.*

In which words, the Apoſtle declares to us the terms of the covenant between God and man. For the word θεμέλιος which is here tranſlated *foundation*, according to the uſual ſignification of it, is likewiſe (as learned men have obſerved) ſometimes uſed for an inſtrument of contract, whereby two parties do oblige themſelves mutually to each other. And this notion

of the word agrees very well with what follows, concerning the *ſeal* affix'd to it, which is very ſutable to a *covenant*, but not at all to a *foundation*. 'Tis true indeed (as the learned *Grotius* hath obſerved) there uſed anciently to be inſcriptions on foundation-ſtones; and the word σφραγὶς, which we render *ſeal*, may likewiſe ſignifie an *inſcription*; and then the ſenſe will be very current, thus; *The foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this* inſcription. But it is to be conſidered, that though σφραγὶς may ſignifie an *inſcription*, yet it is only an *inſcription* upon a *ſeal*, which hath no relation to a foundation, but is very proper to a covenant or mutual obligation. And accordingly the *ſeal* affix'd to this *inſtrument* or *covenant* between God and man, is (in alluſion to the cuſtom of thoſe countries) ſaid to have an inſcription on both ſides, agreeable to the condition of the perſons contracting. On Gods part there is this *impreſs* or inſcription, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*, that is, God will own and reward thoſe that are faithful to him. And on our part, *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.*

Let every one that nameth the name of

Chriſt]

Chriſt] that is, that calls himſelf a Chriſtian. For to name the name of any one, or to have his name called upon us, does, according to the uſe of this phraſe among the *Hebrews*, ſignifie nothing elſe but to be denominated from him. Thus 'tis frequently uſed in the *old* Teſtament, and ſometimes in the *new*, *Do they not blaſpheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?* that is, the name or title of Chriſtians; And that expreſſion, *if ye be reproached for the name of Chriſt*, is at the ſixteenth verſe varied, *if any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian*. So that to name the name of Chriſt, is to call our ſelves Chriſtians. Jam. 2. 7. 1 Pet. 4. 14

Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity. The word ἀδικία is often taken ſtrictly, for injuſtice or unrighteouſneſs; but ſometimes uſed more largely, for ſin and wickedneſs in the general. And ſo it ſeems to be uſed here in the Text, becauſe there is no reaſon from the context to reſtrain it to any particular kind of ſin or vice; and becauſe Chriſtianity lays an equal obligation upon men to abſtain from all ſin. *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity*; that is, every Chriſtian obligeth himſelf by his profeſſi-

on to renounce all ſin, and to live a holy life.

In ſpeaking to this argument I ſhall do theſe two things.

1. Shew what obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon men to live holy lives.

2. Endeavour to perſwade thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, to anſwer this obligation.

I. What obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon men to live holy lives. He that calls himſelf a Chriſtian, profeſſeth to entertain the doctrine of Chriſt; to live in the imitation of his holy example; and to have ſolemnly engaged himſelf to all this. I ſhall ſpeak briefly to theſe; and then come to that which I principally intend, that is, to perſwade men to live accordingly.

1. He that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian, profeſſeth to entertain the doctrine of Chriſt, that is, to believe the whole Goſpel, to aſſent to all the articles of the Chriſtian faith; to all the precepts, and promiſes, and threatnings of the Goſpel. Now the great deſign, the proper intention of this doctrine is, to take men off from

from ſin, and to direct and encourage them to a holy life. It teacheth us what we are to believe, concerning God and Chriſt; not with any deſign to entertain our minds with the bare ſpeculation of thoſe truths, but to better our lives. For every article of our faith is a proper argument againſt ſin, and a powerful motive to obedience. The whole hiſtory of Chriſts appearance in the world, all the diſcourſes and actions of this life, and the ſufferings of his death, do all tend to this; the ultimate iſſue of all is, the *deſtroying of ſin*; So St. *John* tells us, *for this purpoſe was the Son of God manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the devil.* But this is moſt expreſly and fully declar'd to us, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12, 13, 14. *The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* 1 Joh. 3. 8.

The *precepts* of the Goſpel do ſtrictly command holineſs, and that univerſal; the

purity of our ſouls, and he chaſtity of our
2Cor.7.1. bodies; *to cleanſe our ſelves from all fil-*
1Theſ. 5. 22. *thineſs of fleſh and ſpirit; to abſtain from*
1Pet.1.15. *all kind of evil; to be holy in all manner of converſation.* They require us to endeavour after the higheſt degrees of holineſs, that are attainable by us in this imperfect ſtate; *to be holy as he that hath*
Mat.5.48. *called us is holy; to be perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

And all the *promiſes* of the Goſpel are ſo many encouragements to obedience and
2Cor.7.1. a holy life; *having therefore theſe promiſes, let us cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfect holineſs in the fear of God.* We are told by St. *Peter*, that theſe exceeding great and precious promiſes are given to us, that by theſe *we might*
2Pet.1.4. *be partakers of a Divine nature, having eſcaped the pollution that is in the world through luſt*; and that we might *give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledg, and to knowledg temperance and patience and brotherly-kindneſs and charity.*

And the *threatnings* of the Goſpel are ſo many powerful arguments againſt ſin.

Therefore the Apoſtle calls the *Goſpel the power of God unto ſalvation*, becauſe
Rom.1.16 18. therein the *wrath of God is revealed from heaven*

heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men. So that if we call our ſelves Chriſtians, we profeſs to embrace the holy doctrine of the Chriſtian Religion, which is perfectly oppoſite to all impiety and wickedneſs of life. We profeſs to be governed by thoſe laws, which do ſtrictly enjoin holineſs and virtue. We profeſs to be perſwaded, that all the promiſes and threatnings of the Goſpel are true, which offer ſuch great and glorious rewards to obedience, and threaten tranſgreſſion and diſobedience with ſuch dreadful puniſhments. And if ſo, we are obliged both by our reaſon and our intereſt to live accordingly.

2. He that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian, profeſſeth to live in the imitation of Chriſt's example, and to follow his ſteps, *who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* The Son of God came into the world, not only by his Doctrine to inſtruct us in the way to happineſs, and by his death to make expiation of ſin; but by his life to be an example to us of holineſs and virtue. Therefore in Scripture we find ſeveral *Titles* given him which import his exemplarineſs; as of a *prince*, and a *captain*; a *maſter*, and a *guide*. Now if he be our patern, we ſhould endeavour

to be like him, *to have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus*; to *walk in love, as he also hath loved us, and given himself for us.* We should aspire after the highest degree of holiness, make it our constant and sincere endeavour, to please God and do his will, and *to fulfil all righteousness* as he did. Does any man profess himself a Christian, and yet abandons himself to intemperance and filthy lusts? is this like our Saviour? Are we cruel and unmerciful? is this like the High Priest of our profession? Are we proud and passionate, malicious and revengeful? is this to be like-minded with Christ, who was meek and lowly in Spirit, who prayed for his enemies, and offer'd up his blood to God on the behalf of them that shed it? If we call our selves Christians, we profess to have the life of Christ continually before us, and to be always correcting and reforming our lives by that pattern.

3. He that calls himself a Christian, hath solemnly engaged himself to renounce all sin, and to live a holy life. By Baptism we have solemnly taken upon us the profession of Christianity, and engaged our selves to renounce the Devil and all his works, and obediently to keep Gods commandments. Anciently, those who were

baptized

baptized put off their garments, which ſignified the putting off the body of ſin; and were immers'd and buried in the water, to repreſent the death of ſin; and then did riſe up again out of the water, to ſignifie their entrance upon a new life. And to theſe cuſtoms the Apoſtle alludes, when he ſays, *How ſhall we that are dead to ſin, live any longer therein? Know you not, that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him in baptiſm into death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life: For if we have been planted together in the likeneſs of his death, we ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his reſurrection, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of ſin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we might not ſerve ſin.* So that by Baptiſm we profeſs to be entred into a new ſtate, and to be endued with a new nature; *to have put off the old man with his deeds*; to have quitted *our former converſation, which is corrupt according to deceitful luſts*, and to be *renewed in the ſpirit of our minds*, and to have *put on the new man which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs*. And there- Rom. 6. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

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fore Baptiſm is called the *putting on of Chriſt*; *As many of you as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt.* Now if we profeſs to have put on Chriſt, we muſt quit and renounce our luſts, becauſe theſe are inconſiſtent, as appears by the oppoſition which the Apoſtle makes between them; *put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and make not proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof.*

Gal. 3.27.

Rom. 13. 14.

And as we did ſolemnly covenant with God to this purpoſe in Baptiſm; ſo we do ſolemnly renew this obligation, ſo often as we receive the bleſſed Sacrament of Chriſt's body and blood. Therefore the cup in the ſacrament, is called the *new Covenant in his Blood*; that is, this repreſents the ſhedding of Chriſts blood, by which rite the covenant between God and man is ratified. And as by this God doth confirm his promiſes to us; ſo we do oblige our ſelves to be faithful and obedient to him, *And if we ſin wilfully, after we have received the knowledg of the truth,* (that is, after we are become Chriſtians) *we account the blood of the Covenant a common thing*; that is, we make nothing of the ſolemneſt *rite* that ever was uſed in the world, for confirmation of any covenant, the ſhedding of the blood

of

of the Son of God. And that this was always underſtood to be the meaning of this holy Sacrament, to renew our Covenant with God, and ſolemnly to confirm our reſolutions of a holy life, is very plain from that account which *Pliny* * gives us of the worſhip of the Chriſtians, in a Letter to *Trajan* the Emperor; in which he tells him, *that they aſſembled early in the morning before day, to ſing a Hymn to Chriſt as God*; and then (ſaith he) they do, *ſacramento ſe obſtringere, bind themſelves by a ſacrament, or oath, not to rob, or ſteal, or commit adultery; not to break their word, or falſifie their truſt; and after they have eaten together, they depart home.* Which is plainly an account of the Chriſtians celebrating of the holy Sacrament, which it ſeems was then look'd upon as an *oath*, whereby Chriſtians did ſolemnly covenant, and engage themſelves againſt all wickedneſs and vice.

* *Plin.* Epiſt. L. 10. Epiſt. 97.

Thus you ſee, what obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon us to holineſs of life. From all which it is evident, that the Goſpel requires ſomething on our part. For the Covenant between God and us, is a mutual engagement; and as there are *bleſſings* promiſed on his part, ſo there are *conditions* to be performed on ours. And if we live wicked and unholy

holy lives, if we neglect our duty towards God, we have no title at all to the Blessings of this Covenant. The contrary doctrine to this, hath been greedily entertained to the vast prejudice of Christianity; namely. that in this new Covenant of the Gospel, God takes all upon himself, and requires nothing, or as good as nothing, of us; that it would be a disparagement to the freedom of Gods grace, to think he expects any thing from us. That the Gospel is all promises, and our part is only to believe and embrace them; that is, to be confident that God will perform them, if we can but think so, though we do nothing else; which is an easie condition to fools, but the hardest in the world to a wise man; who, if his salvation depended upon it, could never perswade himself to believe, that the holy God, without any respect at all to his repentance and amendment, would bestow upon him forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, only because he was confident that God would do so. As if any man could think, that it were a thing so highly acceptable to God, that men should believe of him, that he loves to dispence his grace & mercy upon the most unfit and unreasonable terms. A Covenant does necessarily

ceſſarily imply a mutual obligation; and the Scripture plainly tells us, what are the terms and conditions of this Covenant, both on Gods part and ours, namely, that he *will be our God*, and we *ſhall be his people*. But he hath no-where ſaid that though we be not *his people*, yet he will be *our God*. The *ſeal* of this Covenant hath two *inſcriptions* upon it; one on Gods part, that he will *know them that are his*; and another on our part, that we ſhall *depart from iniquity*. But if we will not ſubmit to this condition, God will not know us, but will bid us depart from him. So our Saviour tells us, *I will ſay unto them, depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I know you not*. Mat. 7. 23. If we deal falſly in covenant with God, and break looſe from all our engagements to him, we releaſe God from all the promiſes that he hath made to us. If we neglect to perform thoſe conditions upon which he hath ſuſpended the performance of his promiſes, we diſcharge the obligation on Gods part, and he remains faithful though he deny us that happineſs which he promiſed under thoſe conditions which we have neglected.

II. I come now to the *ſecond* thing propounded, and that is, to perſwade thoſe who profeſs Chriſtianity, to anſwer thoſe obli-

obligations to a holy life, which their Religion lays upon them. We all call our ſelves Chriſtians, and would be very much offended at any man that ſhould deny us this title. But let us not cheat our ſelves with an empty and inſignificant name; but if we will call our ſelves Chriſtians, let us fill up this great title; and make good our profeſſion by a ſutable life and practice. And to perſwade us hereto, I will urge theſe three conſiderations.

1. The indency of the contrary.
2. The great ſcandal of it to our bleſſed Saviour and his holy Religion, and
3. The infinite danger of it to our own ſouls.

1. Conſider how unbecoming it is, for a man to live unſutably to his profeſſion. If we call our ſelves Chriſtians, we profeſs to entertain the doctrine of the Goſpel; to be taught and inſtructed by the beſt maſter; to be the diſciples of the higheſt and moſt perfect inſtitution that ever was in the world; to have embraced a Religion, which contains the moſt exact rules for the conduct and government of our lives; which lays down the plaineſt precepts;

precepts; ſets before us the beſt patterns and examples of a holy life; and offers us the greateſt aſſiſtances and encouragements to this purpoſe. We profeſs to be furniſhed with the beſt arguments, to excite us to holineſs and virtue; to be awed with the greateſt fears, and animated with the beſt hopes of any men in the world.

Now whoever makes ſuch a profeſſion as this, obligeth himſelf to live anſwerably; to do nothing that ſhall groſly contradict it. Nothing is more abſurd, than for a man to act contrary to his profeſſion; to pretend to great matters, and perform nothing of what he pretends to. VViſe men will not be caught with pretences, nor be impoſed upon with an empty profeſſion; but they will enquire into our lives and actions, and by theſe they will make a judgment of us. They cannot ſee into our hearts, nor pry into our underſtandings, to diſcover what it is that we inwardly believe; they cannot diſcern thoſe ſecret and ſupernatural principles that we pretend to be acted by: But this they can do, they can examine our actions, and behold our good or bad works, and try whether our lives be indeed anſwerable to our profeſſion, and do really excel the lives of

of other men, who do not pretend to ſuch great things. There are a great many ſagacious perſons, who will eaſily find us out; will look under our mask, and ſee through all our fine pretenſions, and will quickly diſcern the abſurdity of telling the world that we believe one thing, when we do the contrary.

If we profeſs to believe the Chriſtian Religion, we expoſe our ſelves to the ſcorn and contempt of every diſcerning man, if we do not live up to it. With what face can any man continue in the practice of any known ſin, that profeſſeth to believe the holy doctrine of the Goſpel, which forbids all ſin, under the higheſt and ſevereſt penalties? If we did but believe the hiſtory of the Goſpel, as we do any ordinary credible ſtory; and did we but regard the laws of Chriſtianity, as we do the laws of the Land: were we but perſwaded, that fraud and oppreſſion, lying and perjury, intemperance and uncleanneſs, covetouſneſs and pride, malice and revenge, the neglect of God and Religion, will bring men to hell as certainly as treaſon and felony will bring a man under the ſentence of the law: Had we but the ſame awe and regard for the threatnings and promiſes of the Goſpel, that we

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have for the frowns and ſmiles of thoſe who are in power and authority, even this would be effectual to keep us from ſin. And if the Goſpel have not this effect upon us, it is an argument that we do not believe it.

'Tis to no purpoſe to go about to perſwade men, that we do heartily entertain the doctrine of Chriſt, *that doctrine* which hath all the characters of piety and juſtice, of holineſs and virtue upon it; which obligeth men to *whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are chaſt, whatſoever things are lovely, and of good report*, if we have no regard to theſe things in our lives. He that would know what a man believes, let him attend rather to what he does, than to what he talks. He that leads a wicked life, makes a more credible and effectual profeſſion of infidelity, than he who in words only denies the Goſpel. It is the hardeſt thing in the world to imagine that *that* man believes Chriſtianity, who by ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, does deny and renounce it. If we profeſs our ſelves Chriſtians, it may juſtly be expected from us, that we ſhould evidence this by our actions; that we ſhould live at another rate than the Heathens did;

that we who worſhip a holy and juſt God, ſhould not allow our ſelves the liberty to ſin, as thoſe did who worſhipped ſuch Gods as were examples of ſin, and patrons of their vices. Thou who profeſſeſt thy ſelf a Chriſtian, may'ſt not walk in the luſts of the fleſh, and of uncleanneſs, as thoſe did who worſhipped a luſtful *Jupiter*, and a wanton *Venus*. Thou may'ſt not be intemperate as thoſe were, who worſhipped a drunken *Bacchus*. Thou may'ſt not be cruel and unmerciful as thoſe were, who worſhipped a fierce *Saturn*: Nor may'ſt thou ſteal, as thoſe did who worſhipped a thievish *Mercury*. Thou muſt remember that thou art a Chriſtian; and when thou art ready to debaſe thy ſelf to any vile luſt, conſider what title thou bear'eſt, by what name thou art called, whoſe diſciple thou art; and then ſay to thy ſelf, ſhall I allow my ſelf in any impiety or wickedneſs of life, who pretend to be inſtructed by that grace of God which teacheth men to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts? Shall I cheriſh any ſinful paſſion, who pretend to have mortified all theſe, and to have *put off the old man with his deeds*?

It is not being gilded over with the external profeſſion of Chriſtianity, that will

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avail us; our Religion muſt be a vital principle, inwardly to change and tranſform us. What the Apoſtle ſays concerning Circumciſion, we may apply to them that are Baptized, and make an outward profeſſion of Chriſtianity: Baptiſm verily profiteth, if we obey the Goſpel; but if we walk contrary to the precepts of it, our Baptiſm is no Baptiſm, and our Chriſtianity is Heatheniſm. If by our lives and actions we do contradict that Religion which we profeſs, we do by this very thing, prove our ſelves to be counterfeits and hypocrites; and that we have only taken up our Religion for a faſhion, and received it according to cuſtom; we were born in a Countrey where it is reverenced, and therefore we are of it. And the reaſon why we are Chriſtians, rather than Jews, or Turks, or Heathens, is becauſe Chriſtian Religion had the fortune to come firſt in our way, and to beſpeak us at our entrance into the world.

Are we not aſhamed to take up a profeſſion upon ſuch ſlight grounds, and to wear about us ſuch an empty title? It ſhould make our blood to riſe in our faces, to conſider what a diſtance there is between our Religion and our lives. I re-

member *Tully* upbraids the Philoſophers very ſmartly, for living unſutably to their Doctrines. A Philoſopher (ſaith he) is unpardonable, if he miſcarry in his life, *quod in officio, cujus magiſter eſſe vult, labitur; artemque vitæ profeſſus, delinquit in vita; becauſe he is faulty in that, wherein he pretends to be a maſter; and whilſt he profeſſeth an Art of living better than other men, he miſcarries in this life.* With how much greater reaſon may we challenge Chriſtians for the miſcarriages of their lives, which are ſo directly contrary to their profeſſion? It may juſtly be ſuſpected, that ſo perfect an inſtitution as the Goſpel is, which the Son of God came from Heaven on purpoſe to propagate in the world, ſhould make men more ſtrictly holy and virtuous, and ſet the profeſſors of it at a greater diſtance from all impurity and vice, than ever any inſtitution in the world did. If a man profeſs any other *Art* or *Calling*, it is expected that he ſhould be skill'd in it, and excel thoſe who do not pretend to it. 'Tis the greateſt diſpargement to a Phyſician that can be, to ſay of him, that he is in other reſpects an excellent man, only he hath no great skill in diſcaſes, and the methods of cure; becauſe this is his *Profeſſion*: He might be pardon'd

don'd for other defects, but the proper skill of his *Art* may juſtly be expected from him. So for a Chriſtian; to ſay of him, the worſt thing in him is his *life*; he is very orthodox in his opinions, but he's an ill-natur'd man, one of very violent paſſions; he will be very frequently drunk; he makes no conſcience of his dealings; he is very uncharitable to all that differ from him: This man is faulty in his profeſſion, he is defective in that which ſhould be his excellency; he may have orthodox opinions in Religion, but when all is done, there is no ſuch errour and hereſie, nothing ſo fundamentally oppoſite to Religion as a wicked life. A Chriſtian does not pretend to have a better wit, or a more piercing underſtanding than a Turk or a Heathen; but he profeſſeth to live better than they; to be more chaſt and more temperate, more juſt and more charitable, more meek and gentle, more loving and peaceable than other men: If he fail in this, where is the *Art* the man boaſts of? to what purpoſe is all this noiſe and ſtir about the Goſpel, and the holy Doctrine of Chriſt? If any man profeſs himſelf a Chriſtian, and do not live better than others, he is a meer pretender and *Mountebank* in Religion;

he's a bungler in his own *Art*, and unskil'd in his proper profeſſion. This is the firſt, the indecency of the thing.

2. Conſider how great a ſcandal this muſt needs be to our bleſſed Saviour, and his holy Religion. The Chriſtian Religion hath undertaken many a hard cenſure for the miſcarriages of the profeſſors of it. The impieties and vices of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, have cauſed many ſharp reflections upon Chriſtianity, and made the Son of God and the bleſſed Saviour of the world, to wear the odious names of deceiver and impoſtor. If a man did deſign to do the greateſt ſpight to Religion, he could not give it a deeper wound, he could not take a more effectual courſe to diſparage it, than by a lewd and debauched life. For this will ſtill be an objection, in the minds of thoſe who are ſtrangers and enemies to our Religion; If the Goſpel were ſo excellent an inſtitution as it is reported to be, ſurely we ſhould ſee better effects of it in the lives of thoſe who profeſs it. When we would perſwade a Heathen to our Religion, and tell him, how holy a God we ſerve, what excellent patterns we imitate, what ſpiritual and divine precepts of holineſs and virtue our Religion does contain: may not

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he reply, would you have me to believe you, when I see you do not believe your selves? If you believed your Religion, you would live according to it. For if the Gospel were every word of it false; if there were neither a Heaven to be hoped for, nor a Hell to be feared after this life, how could many Christians live worse than they do?

As we would not proclaim to the world, that the Gospel is an unholy and vicious Institution, let us take heed that we bring no scandal upon it by our lives, lest the enemies of our Religion say, as *Salvian* tells us they did in his time, *Si Christus sancta docuisset, Christiani sanctè vixissent*, surely *if Christ had taught so holy a doctrine, Christians would have lived holier lives*. *Tully* tells us, that one of the shrewdest arguments that ever was brought against Philosophy, was this, *quosdam perfectos Philosophos turpiter vivere, that some great Philosophers led very filthy lives*. *Celsus* and *Porphyry*, *Hierocles* and *Julian*, among all their witty invectives against Christian Religion, have nothing against it that reflects so much upon it, as do the wicked lives of so many Christians. The greatest enmity to Religion, is to profess it, and to live unanswerably to it.

This consideration ought to affect us; I am sure the Apostle speaks of it with great passion and vehemency; *For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.* A *Jew* or a *Turk* is not so great an enemy to Christianity as a lewd and vicious Christian. Therefore let me beseech Christians, as they tender the honour of their Saviour, and the credit of their Religion, that they would conform their lives to the holy precepts of Christianity. And if there be any, who are resolved to continue in a vicious course to the injury and disparagement of Christianity, I could almost entreat of them, that they would quit their profession, and renounce their Baptism; that they would lay aside their title of Christians, and initiate themselves in Heathenish rites and superstitions, or be circumcised for *Jews* or *Turks*: For it were really better upon some accounts, that such men should abandon their Profession, than keep on a vizard which serves to no other purpose but to scare others from Religion.

Phil. 3. 18

3. And lastly, Let us consider the danger

ger we expoſe our ſelves to, by not living anſwerably to our Religion. And this, I hope, may prevail upon ſuch as are not moved by the former conſiderations. Hypocrites are inſtanc'd in, in Scripture, as a ſort of ſinners that ſhall have the ſharpeſt torments, and the fierceſt damnation. When our Saviour would ſet forth the great ſeverity of the Lord towards the evil ſervant, he expreſſeth it thus; *he ſhall cut him in ſunder, and appoint him his portion with Hypocrites.* Matt. 24. 51. So that the puniſhment of Hypocrites, ſeems to be made in the meaſure and ſtandard of the higheſt puniſhment. Thou profeſſeſt to believe in Chriſt, and to hope in him for ſalvation; but in the mean time, thou liveſt a wicked and unholy life, thou doſt not believe, but preſume on him; and wilt find at the great day, that this thy confidence will be thy confuſion, and he whom thou hopeſt will be thy Advocate and Saviour, will prove thy Accuſer and thy Judg. What our Saviour ſays to the Jews, *There is one that accuſeth you, even Moſes in whom ye truſt*, Joh. 5. 45. may very well be applied to falſe Chriſtians; there is one that *accuſeth* you, and will condemn you, even *Jeſus in whom ye truſt*.

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The profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and mens having the name of Chriſt named upon them, will be ſo far from ſecuring them from Hell, that it will ſink them the deeper into it. Many are apt to pity the poor Heathens, who never heard of the name of Chriſt, and ſadly to condole their caſe; but, as our Saviour ſaid upon another occaſion, *Weep not for them, weep for your ſelves.* There's no ſuch miſerable perſon in the world as a degenerate Chriſtian, becauſe he falls into the greateſt miſery, from the greateſt advantages and opportunities of being happy. Doſt thou lament the condition of *Socrates*, and *Cato*, and *Ariſtides*, and doubt what ſhall become of them at the day of Judgment? and canſt thou, who art an impious and prophane Chriſtian, think that thou ſhalt eſcape the damnation of Hell?

Doſt thou believe that the moral Heathen ſhall be caſt out? and canſt thou who haſt led a wicked life, under the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, have the impudence to hope, that thou ſhalt ſit down with *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* in the Kingdom of God? No, thoſe ſins which are committed by Chriſtians under the enjoyment of the Goſpel, are of a deeper dye, and clothed with blacker aggravations,

tions, than the ſins of Heathens are capable of. A Pagan may live without God in the world, and be unjuſt towards men at a cheaper rate, and upon eaſier terms, than thou who art a Chriſtian. Better had it been, thou hadſt never known one ſyllable of the Goſpel, never heard of the name of Chriſt, than that having taken it upon thee, thou ſhouldeſt not *depart from iniquity*. Happy had it been for thee, that thou hadſt been born a Jew, or a Turk, or a poor Indian, rather than that being bred among Chriſtians, and profeſſing thy ſelf of that number, thou ſhouldſt lead a vicious and unholy life.

I have inſiſted the longer upon theſe arguments, that I might if poſſible, awaken men to a ſerious conſideration of their lives, and perſwade them to a real reformation of them; that I may oblige all thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, to live up to the eſſential and fundamental Laws of our Religion; to love God, and to love our neighbour; to do to every man as we would have him to do to us, to mortifie our luſts, and ſubdue our paſſions, and ſincerely to endeavour to grow in every grace and virtue, and to abound in all the fruits of righteouſ-

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neſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt, to the praiſe and glory of God.

This indeed would become our profeſſion, and be honourable to our Religion; and would remove one of the greateſt obſtacles to the progreſs of the Goſpel. For how can we expect that the doctrine of God our Saviour ſhould gain any conſiderable ground in the world, ſo long as by the unworthy lives of ſo many Chriſtians 'tis repreſented to the world at ſo great diſadvantage? If ever we would have Chriſtian Religion effectually recommended, it muſt be by the holy and unblameable lives of thoſe who make profeſſion of it. Then indeed it would look with ſo amiable a countenance, as to invite many to it; and carry ſo much majeſty and authority in it, as to command reverence from its greateſt enemies, and make men to acknowledg that God is in us of a truth, and to glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.

The good God grant, that as we have taken upon us the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, ſo we may be careful ſo to live, that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; that the grace of God which bringeth

ſalvation

ſalvation, may teach us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, &c.

PHIL.

PHIL. iij. 20.

For our converſation is in Heaven.

FOR the underſtanding of which words, we need to look back no further than the 18*th verſe* of this *chapter*; where the Apoſtle with great vehemency and paſſion ſpeaks of ſome among the *Philippians*, who indeed profeſs'd Chriſtianity, but yet would do any thing to decline ſuffering for that profeſſion; *there are many that walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the croſs of Chriſt*; they cannot endure to ſuffer with him, and for him; they are ſo ſenſual and wedded to this world, that they will do any thing to avoid perſecution; ſo he deſcribes them in the next *verſe*, *whoſe end*

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is. deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, whoſe glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things. Now in oppoſition to theſe ſenſual and earthly-minded men, the Apoſtle gives us the character of the true Chriſtians, they are ſuch as mind Heaven and another world, and prefer the hopes of that, to all the intereſts of this life; *our converſation is in Heaven.*

For the right underſtanding of which *phraſe*, be pleaſed to obſerve, that it is an alluſion to a City or Corporation, and to the priviledges and manners of thoſe who are free of it. And Heaven is ſeveral times in Scripture repreſented to us under this notion of a *City.* It is ſaid
Heb. 11. 10. of *Abraham*, that *he looked for a City which hath foundations, whoſe builder and*
Heb. 12. 22. *maker is God.* It is called likewiſe, *the City of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem.* And the ſame Apoſtle, ſpeaking of the uncertain condition of Chriſtians in this world, ſays of them, that *here they have*
Heb. 14. 14. *no continuing City, but look for one that is to come.*

Now to this *City* the Apoſtle alludes here in the Text, when he ſays, *our converſation is in Heaven.* For the word πολίτευμα which is rendred *converſation*, may either ſignifie the *priviledg* of Citizens

tizens, or their *converſation* and manners, or may take in both theſe.

In the *firſt* ſenſe of the *priviledg* of Citizens, we find πολιτεία, a word of near affinity with this ſometimes us'd; *with a great ſum* (ſays the Captain to *Paul*) *obtained I*, τὴν πολιτείαν ταύτην, *this freedom*. Act. 22. 28. According to this ſenſe, ἡμῶν τὸ πολίτευμα, may very well be rendred, as *Tertullian* often does this Text, *municipatus noſter, our Citizenſhip is in Heaven*; an alluſion perhaps (as the learned Dr. *Hamond* obſerves) to thoſe, who though they were not born at *Rome*, and it may be lived at a great diſtance from it, had yet *jus civitatis Romanæ*, the priviledg of *Roman* Citizens. In like manner, the Apoſtle here deſcribes the condition of Chriſtians. 'Tis true, we are born here in this world, and live in it, but we belong to another Corporation; we are denizens of another Country, and free of that City which is above.

In the *other* ſenſe of the *converſation* of Citizens, we find the *verb* πολιτεύεσθαι, uſed towards the beginning of this *Epiſtle*; *Let your converſation be as it becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt*. And why may not the word πολίτευμα, in the Text, without any inconvenience include both theſe? as if the Phil. 1. 27

Apoſtle had ſaid, there are ſome that mind earthly things, and are ſo addicted to them, that rather than part with them they will forſake their Religion; but as for us, we conſider that we are Citizens of Heaven; and accordingly we converſe and demean our ſelves in this world, as thoſe that are free of another City, and do belong to it.

So that to have *our converſation in Heaven*, does imply theſe two things.

Firſt, The ſerious thoughts and conſideration of Heaven.

Secondly, The effect which thoſe thoughts ought to have upon our lives.

Theſe two things take up the meaning of my Text, and ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

I. The ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of Heaven, that is, of the happy and glorious ſtate of good men in another life. And concerning this, there are two things principally which offer themſelves to our conſideration. *Firſt*, The happineſs of this ſtate. *Secondly*, The way and means whereby we may come to partake of this happineſs.

Firſt,

First, We will consider the happiness of this state. But what, and how great this happiness is, I am not able to represent to you. These things are yet, in a great measure, within the vail; and it does not now fully *appear what we shall be*. The Scriptures have reveal'd so much in general, concerning the reality and unspeakable felicities of this state, as may satisfie us for the present, and serve to enflame our desires after it, and to quicken our endeavours for the obtaining of it; as *namely*, that it is incomparably beyond any happiness of this world; that it is very great; and that it is eternal; in a word, that it is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine.

1. It is incomparably beyond any happiness of this world. It is free from all those sharp and bitter ingredients, which do abate and allay the felicities of this life. All the enjoyments of this world they are mix'd, and uncertain, and unsatisfying; nay so far are they from giving us satisfaction, that the very sweetest of them are satiating and cloying.

None of the comforts of this life are pure and unmixt. There is something of *vanity* mingled with all our earthly enjoyments, and that causeth *vexation of spirit*.

There is no ſenſual pleaſure, but is either purchas'd by ſome pain, or attended with it, or ends in it. A great eſtate is neither to be got without care, not kept without fear, nor loſt without trouble. Dignity and greatneſs is troubleſom almoſt to all mankind; it is commonly uneaſie to them that have it, and it is uſually hated and envy'd by thoſe that have it not. Knowledg, that is one of the beſt and ſweeteſt pleaſures of humane life; and yet if we may believe the experience of one, who had as great a ſhare of it as any of the Sons of men ever had, he will tell us, that *this alſo is vexation of ſpirit; for in much wiſdom there is much grief, and he that encreaſeth knowledg, encreaſeth ſorrow.*

Eccleſ. 1. 17, 18.

Thus it is with all the things of this world; the beſt of them have a mixture of good and evil, of joy and ſorrow in them: but the happineſs of the next life, is free from all allay and mixture. In the deſcription of the *new Jeruſalem* it is ſaid, that *there ſhall be no more curſe, and there ſhall be no night there*, nothing to imbitter our bleſſings, or obſcure our glory. Heaven is the proper region of happineſs; there only are pure joys, and an unmingled felicity.

Rev. 22. 3. 5.

But the enjoyments of this world as they

they are mix'd, ſo they are uncertain. So wavering and inconſtant are they, that we can have no ſecurity of them; when we think our ſelves to have the faſteſt hold of them, they ſlip out of our hands we know not how. For this reaſon, *Solomon* very elegantly calls them things *that are not*, *Why wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make to themſelves wings*, and *flye like an Eagle towards heaven*. So fugitive are they, that after all our endeavours to ſecure them, they may break looſe from us, and in an inſtant vaniſh out of our ſight; *riches make to themſelves wings, and fly like an Eagle*, intimating to us, that riches are often acceſſary to their own ruin. Many times the greatneſs of a man's eſtate, and nothing elſe, hath been the cauſe of the loſs of it, and of taking away the life of the owner thereof. The *fairneſs* of ſome mens fortune, hath been a temptation to thoſe who have been more powerful, to *raviſh* it from them; thus *riches make to themſelves wings*. So that he that enjoys the greateſt happineſs of this world, does ſtill want one happineſs more, to ſecure to him for the future what he poſſeſſes for the preſent. But the happineſs of Heaven is a ſteady and conſtant light, fixt and unchangeable

as the fountain from whence it ſprings, *the father of lights, with whom is no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning.*

And if the enjoyment of this life were certain, yet they are unſatisfying. This is the *vanity of vanities*, that every thing in this world can trouble us, but nothing can give us ſatisfaction. I know not how it is, but either we, or the things of this world, or both, are ſo phantaſtical, that we can neither be well with theſe things, nor well without them. If we be hungry, we are in pain; and if we eat to the full, we are uneaſie. If we be poor, we think our ſelves miſerable; and when we come to be rich, we commonly really are ſo. If we are in a low condition, we fret and murmure; and if we chance to get up and to be rais'd to greatneſs, we are many times farther from contentment than we were before. So that we purſue the happineſs of this world, juſt as little children chaſe birds; when we think we are come very near it, and have it almoſt in our hands, it flies farther from us than it was at firſt.

Nay, ſo far are the enjoyments of this world from affording us ſatisfaction, that the ſweeteſt of them are moſt apt to ſatiate and cloy us. All the pleaſures of this

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world are ſo contriv'd, as to yield us very little happineſs. If they go off quickly, they ſignifie nothing; and if they ſtay long, we are ſick of them. After a full draught of any ſenſual pleaſure, we preſently loath it, and hate it as much after the enjoyment, as we courted it and long'd for it in the expectation. But the delights of the other world, as they will give us full ſatisfaction, ſo we ſhall never be weary of them, Every repetition of them will be accompanied with a new pleaſure and contentment. In the felicities of Heaven theſe two things ſhall be reconcil'd, which never met together in any ſenſual delight, long and full enjoyment, and yet a freſh and perpetual pleaſure. As in God's *preſence there is fulneſs of joy*, ſo *at his right hand there ſhall be pleaſures for evermore.*

2. The happineſs of the other life is not only incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world (that, it may be, is no great commendation of it) but it is very great in it ſelf. The happineſs of Heaven is uſually in Scripture deſcrib'd to us by ſuch pleaſures as are manly and excellent, chaſt and intellectual, infinitely more pure and refin'd than thoſe of ſenſe; and if the Scripture at any time deſcend to the metaphors of a *feaſt*, and a *banquet*, and a

marriage, it is plainly by way of accommodation to our weakneſs, and condeſcention to our capacities.

But the chief ingredients of this happineſs (ſo far as the Scripture hath thought fit to reveal it to us) are the perfection of our knowledg, and the height of our love, and the perpetual ſociety and friendſhip of all the bleſſed inhabitants of thoſe glorious manſions; and the joyfull concurrence of all theſe in chearfull expreſſions of gratitude, in the inceſſant praiſes and admiration of the fountain and author of all this happineſs. And what can be more delightfull, than to have our underſtandings entertain'd with a clear ſight of the beſt and moſt perfect Being; with the knowledg of all his works, and of the wiſe deſigns of his providence here in the world? then to live in the reviving preſence of God, and to be continually attending upon Him whoſe favour is life, and whoſe glory is much more above that of any of the Princes of this world, than the greateſt of them is above the pooreſt worm? The Queen of *Sheba* thought *Solomon*'s ſervants happy, in having the opportunity, by ſtanding continually before him, to hear his wiſdom; but in the other world, it ſhall be a happineſs to *Solomon*,

Solomon himſelf, and to the wiſeſt and greateſt perſons that ever were in this world, to ſtand before this great King, to admire his wiſdom, and to behold his glory. Not that I imagine the happineſs of Heaven to conſiſt in a perpetual gazing upon God, and in an idle contemplation of the glories of that place. For as by that bleſſed ſight we ſhall be infinitely tranſported, ſo the Scripture tells us we ſhall be alſo tranſform'd into the image of the divine perfections; we *ſhall ſee God, and we ſhall be like him*; and what greater happineſs can there be, than to be like the happieſt and moſt perfect Being in the world? Beſides, who can tell what employment God may have for us in the next life? We need not doubt, but that He who is happineſs it ſelf, and hath promis'd to make us happy, can eaſily find out ſuch employments and delights for us in the other world, as will be proper and ſutable to that ſtate.

But then beſides the improvement of our knowledg, there ſhall be the moſt delightful exerciſe of love. When we come to heaven, we ſhall enter into the ſociety of the bleſſed Angels, and of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, that is, freed from all thoſe paſſions and infirmities, which do now render the converſation, even of the

the beſt men, ſometimes troubleſom to one another. We ſhall then meet with all thoſe excellent Perſons, thoſe brave Minds, thoſe innocent and charitable Souls, whom we have ſeen, and heard, and read of in this world. There we ſhall meet with many of our dear relations, and intimate friends; and perhaps with many of our enemies, to whom we ſhall then be perfectly reconcil'd, notwithſtanding all the warm conteſts and peeviſh differences which we had with them in this world, even about matters of Religion. For Heaven is a ſtate of perfect love and friendſhip; there will be nothing but kindneſs and good nature there, and all the prudent Arts of endearment, and wiſe waies of rendering converſation mutually pleaſant to one another. And what greater happineſs can be imagin'd, than to converſe freely with ſo many excellent perſons, without any thing of folly or diſguiſe, of jealouſie or deſign upon one another? For then there will be none of thoſe vices and paſſions, of covetouſneſs and ambition, of envy and hatred, of wrath and peeviſhneſs, which do now ſo much ſpoil the pleaſure, and diſturb the quiet of mankind. All quarrels and contentions, ſchiſms and diviſions will then be effectually hin-

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der'd, not by force, but by love; not by compulſion, but by that *charity which never fails*; and all thoſe controverſies in Religion, which are now ſo hotly agitated, will then be finally determin'd, not as we endeavour to end them now, by Canons and Decrees, but by a perfect knowledg and convincing light.

And when this bleſſed ſociety is met together, and thus united by love, they ſhall all joyn in gratitude to their great Patrons and Benefactors, *to Him that ſits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was ſlain; to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath lov'd us, and waſh'd us from our ſins in his own blood.* And they ſhall ſing everlaſting ſongs of praiſe to God, for all his works of wonder; for the effects of that infinite goodneſs, and admirable wiſdom, and almighty power, which are clearly ſeen in the creation and government of the world, and of all the Creatures in it; particularly, for his favours to mankind, for the benefit of their beings, for the comfort of their lives, and for all his merciful providences towards them in this world: But above all, for the redemption of their ſouls by the death of his Son, for the free forgiveneſs of their ſins, for the gracious aſſiſtance of his

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holy Spirit, and for conducting them ſafely through all the ſnares and dangers, the troubles and temptations of this world, to the ſecure poſſeſſion of that glory and happineſs which then they ſhall be partakers of, and are bound to praiſe God for, to all eternity. This, this ſhall be the employment of the bleſſed ſpirits above, and theſe are the chief ingredients of our happineſs which the Scripture mentions. And if there were no other (as there may be ten thouſand more, for any thing I can tell) yet generous and virtuous minds will eaſily underſtand how great a pleaſure there is, in the improvement of our knowledg, and the exerciſe of love, and in a grateful and perpetual acknowledgment of the greateſt benefits that creatures are capable of receiving.

3. This happineſs ſhall be eternal. And though this be but a circumſtance, and do not enter into the nature of our happineſs; yet it is ſo material a one that all the felicities which heaven affords would be imperfect without it. It would ſtrangely damp and allay all our joys, to think that they ſhould ſome time have an end. And the greater our happineſs were, the greater trouble it would be to us to conſider that it muſt have a period. It would make a

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man ſorrowfull indeed, to think of leaving ſuch vaſt poſſeſſions. Indeed if the happineſs of heaven were ſuch as the joys of this world are, it were fit they ſhould be as ſhort; for after a little enjoyment it would cloy us, and we ſhould ſoon grow weary of it: But being ſo excellent, it would ſcarce be a happineſs, if it were not eternal. It would imbitter the pleaſures of heaven (as great as they are) to ſee to an end of them, though it were at never ſo great a diſtance, to conſider that all this vaſt treaſure of happineſs would one day be exhauſted, and that after ſo many years were paſt, we ſhould be as poor and miſerable again as we were once in this world. God hath ſo order'd things, that the vain and empty delights of this world ſhould be temporary and tranſient; but that the great and ſubſtantial pleaſures of the other world ſhould be as laſting as they are excellent, For heaven, as it is an *exceeding*, ſo it is *an eternal weight of glory*. And this is that which crowns the joys of heaven, and baniſhes all fear and trouble from the minds of the bleſſed. And thus to be ſecur'd in the poſſeſſion of our happineſs is an unſpeakable addition to it. For that which is eternal, as it ſhall never determine, ſo it can never

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be diminish'd; for to be diminish'd and to decay, is to draw nearer to an end; but that which shall never have an end, can never come nearer to it.

Oh vast *eternity!* how dost thou swallow up our thoughts, und entertain us at once with delight and amazement? This is the very top and highest pitch of our happiness, upon which we may stand secure, and look down with scorn upon all things here below; and how small and inconsiderable do they appear to us, compar'd with the vast and endless enjoyments of our future state? But oh vain and foolish souls! that are so little concern'd for eternity; that for the trifles of time, and *the pleasures of sin which are but for a season*, can find in our hearts to forfeit an everlasting felicity. Blessed God! why hast thou prepar'd such a happiness for those who neither consider it, nor seek after it? *Why is such a price put into the hands of fools, who have no heart to make use of it*; who fondly chuse to gratifie their lusts, rather than to save their souls; and sottishly prefer the temporary enjoyments of sin, before a blessed immortality?

4. And lastly, This happiness is far above any thing that we can now conceive

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or imagine. It is ſo great, that it cannot now *enter into the heart of man.* We cannot from the experience of any of thoſe pleaſures and delights which we have been acquainted withall in this world, frame an equal *Idea* and conception of it. So that when we come to Heaven, we ſhall be ready to ſay of it, as the Queen of *Sheba* did of *Solomon*'s wiſdom and proſperity, that *half of it hath not been told us*; that the felicities and glories of that ſtate, do far exceed all the fame which we heard of them in this world. For who can ſay how great a good God is? and how happy, he who is the fountain of happineſs, can make thoſe ſouls that love him, and thoſe whom he loves?

In this imperfect ſtate, we are not capable of a full repreſentation of thoſe glories. *We cannot* now *ſee God and live.* A full deſcription of Heaven, and of the pleaſures of that ſtate, would let in joys upon us too big for our narrow capacities, and too ſtrong for weak mortality to bear. *We are now but children, and we ſpeak as children, and underſtand* and think *as children*, concerning theſe things; but in the other ſtate, we ſhall grow up *to be men*, and then we ſhall *put away* theſe *childiſh* thoughts; *now we know but in part, but*

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when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect shall be done away; now
1 Cor. 13. 9,10,11. *we see through a glass darkly* (ἐν αἰνίγματι, *in a riddle*) *but then we shall see face to face; now we know in part, but then we shall know even as also we are known*, as the Apostle discourseth excellently concerning this very matter.

No sooner shall we enter upon the joys of the other world, but our minds shall be rais'd to a strength and activity, as much above that of the most knowing persons in this world, as the thoughts of the greatest Philosopher and wisest man upon earth are above the thoughts of a child or a fool. No man's mind is now so well fram'd to understand any thing in this world, as our understandings shall then be fitted for the knowledg of God, and of the things that belong to that state. In the mean time let us bless God that he hath reveal'd so much of this happiness to us, as is necessary to excite and encourage us to seek after it.

The *Second* thing to be consider'd concerning our future happiness, is the way and means whereby we may come to be made partakers of it. And that in short is, by the constant and sincere endeavours of a holy life, in and through the mercies

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of God, in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Chriſt indeed is the author of our ſalvation, but obedience is the condition of it; ſo the Apoſtle tell us, that Chriſt *is the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him.* Heb. 5. 1. It is *the grace of God* in the Goſpel *which brings* or offers this *ſalvation* to us, but then it is by the *denying of ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and by *living ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world*, that we are *to wait for the bleſſed hope.* Tit. 2. 11, 12. Our Saviour promiſes this happineſs to the pure in heart, *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God*; and elſewhere, the Scripture doth exclude all others from any ſhare or portion in this bleſſedneſs; ſo the Apoſtle aſſures us, *that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* Matt. 5. 8. Heb 18. 14

And holineſs is not only a condition, but a neceſſary qualification for the happineſs of the next life. This is the force of St. *John*'s reaſoning, *we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him.* To *ſee God*, is to be happy; but unleſs we be like him, we cannot ſee him. The ſight and preſence of God himſelf would be no happineſs to that man, who is not like to God in the temper and diſpoſition of his mind. And from hence the Apoſtle infers in the next *verſe, every man that hath this hope in him,*

purifieth himſelf even as he is pure. So that if we live wicked lives, if we allow our ſelves in the practice of any known ſin, we interrupt our hopes of Heaven, and render our ſelves unfit for eternal life. By this means, we defeat all the deſigns of Gods grace and mercy towards us; and ſalvation it ſelf cannot ſave us, if we make our ſelves incapable of that happineſs which God offers. Heaven is in Scripture call'd *an inheritance among them that are ſanctified*, and *the inheritance of the ſaints in light*; ſo that it is not enough that this *inheritance* is promis'd to us, but we muſt be qualifi'd and prepar'd for it, and *be made meet to be made partakers of it.*

And this life is the time of our preparation for our future ſtate. Our ſouls will continue for ever what we make them in this world. Such a temper and diſpoſition of mind as a man carries with him out of this life, he ſhall retain in the next. 'Tis true indeed, heaven perfects thoſe holy and virtuous diſpoſitions which are begun here; but the other world alters no man as to his main ſtate, *he that is filthy will be filthy ſtill*, and *he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous* ſtill. If we do not in a good degree mortifie our luſts and paſſions here, death

death will not kill them for us, but we ſhall carry them with us into the other world. And if God ſhould admit us ſo qualifi'd, into the place of happineſs, yet we ſhall bring that along with us which would infallibly hinder us from being happy. Our ſenſual inclinations and deſires would meet with nothing there, that would be ſutable to them; and we ſhould be perpetually tormented with thoſe appetites which we brought with us out of this world, becauſe we ſhould find nothing there to gratifie them withall. For as the Apoſtle ſays in another ſenſe, *The kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* The happineſs of heaven conſiſts in ſuch things, as a wicked man hath no guſt and reliſh for. So that if a covetous, or ambitious, or voluptuous man were in heaven, he would be juſt like the rich man in hell, tormented with a continual thirſt, and burnt up in the flames of his own ardent deſires; and would not be able, amidſt all the plenty and treaſures of that place, to find ſo much as one drop of ſutable pleaſure and delight to quench and allay that heat. So likewiſe our fierce and unruly paſſions, if we ſhould carry them with us into the other world, how inconſiſtent would they be

with happineſs? They would not only make us miſerable our ſelves, but be a trouble to all thoſe with whom we ſhould converſe. If a man of an envious and malicious, of a peeviſh and paſſionate temper, were admitted into the manſions of the bleſſed, he would not only be unhappy himſelf, but would diſturb the quiet of others, and raiſe ſtorms even in thoſe calm regions. Vain man! that dreameſt of being happy, without any diſpoſition or preparation for it. To be happy, is to enjoy what we deſire, and to live with thoſe whom we love. But there is nothing in heaven ſutable to the deſire and appetites of a wicked man. All the joys of that place, and the delights of that ſtate, are purely ſpiritual; and are only to be reliſh'd by thoſe, who have *purified themſelves as God is pure*. But if thou be carnal and ſenſual, what are theſe things to thee? What happineſs would it be to thee, to ſee God, and to have him always in thy view, who was never in all thy thoughts; to be tied to live for ever in his company, who is of a quite contrary temper and diſpoſition to thy ſelf, whoſe preſence thou dreadeſt, and whom, whilſt thou was in this world, thou could never endure to think upon? So that the pleaſures

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of Heaven it ſelf, could ſignifie no good or happineſs to that man, who is not ſo diſpos'd as to take pleaſure in them. Heaven is too pure an air for corrupt ſouls to live and breathe in; and the whole employment and converſation of that place, as it would be unſutable, ſo would it alſo be unacceptable, to a ſenſual and vicious perſon.

From all this it appears, how neceſſary it is for us to prepare our ſelves for this bleſſed ſtate, by the conſtant and ſincere endeavours of a holy life, and by mortifying every luſt and inordinate paſſion in our ſouls. For till this be done, we are not meet to be made partakers of the felicities of the other world. And thus I have done with the *firſt* thing imply'd in this phraſe *of having our converſation in heaven*, *viz.* the ſerious thoughts and conſideration of heaven; or the happineſs of that ſtate, and of the way and means whereby that happineſs is to be attained.

II. The *having our converſation in heaven* does imply likewiſe the effect which thoſe conſiderations ought to have upon our hearts and lives: As

1. To convince us of the vanity of this world. God hath on purpoſe made this

world troubleſom and uneaſie to us, that there might be no ſufficient temptation to reaſonable and conſiderate men, to take them off from the care and thought of their future happineſs; that God and heaven might have no rival here below; that there might be nothing in this world, that might pretend to our affection, or court us with any advantage, in compariſon of everlaſting life and glory.

When we come to dye, and eternity ſhall preſent it ſelf to our ſerious and waking thoughts; then things will put on another face, and thoſe things which we valued ſo much in this life, will then appear to be nothing worth; but thoſe things which we neglected, to be of infinite concernment to us, and worthy to have been the care and endeavour of our whole lives. And if we would conſider theſe things in time, while the opportunities of life and health are before us, we might be convinc'd at a cheaper rate, and come to be ſatisfi'd of the vanity of this world, before we deſpair'd of the happineſs of the other.

2. To make us very active and induſtrious, to be as good, and to do as much good as we can in this life, that ſo we may be qualifi'd and diſpos'd for the happineſs of the

the next. Men are uſually very induſtrious for the things of this life, to be rich and great in the world: Did we but value heaven half as much as it deſerves, we ſhould take infinitely more pains for that. So often as we conſider the glories that are above, how does it accuſe our ſloth, and condemn our folly, that we are leſs concerned for our ſouls than moſt men are for their bodies; that we will not labour half ſo much for an eternal inheritance, as men ordinarily do for theſe corruptible things?

Let us remember, that we are haſting apace to another world, and that our eternal happineſs now lies at the ſtake. And how ſhould it quicken our endeavours, to have ſuch a reward ſet before us, to have Crowns and Septers in our eyes? Would we but often repreſent to our minds the glorious things of another world, what fervours ſhould we feel in our hearts? we ſhould be all life, and ſpirit, and wing; and ſhould do Gods will, almoſt with the ſame readineſs and delight, as the *Angels* do, *who continually behold the face of their Father*. The conſideration of heaven, and the firm perſwaſion of our future happineſs, ſhould actuate all the powers of our ſouls, and be continually inſpiring us with new vigour

in the ways of holineſs and virtue. How ſhould this thought ſwell our reſolutions, and confirm our purpoſes of obedience, that if we have our *fruit unto holineſs*, our *end will be everlaſting life*.

3. To mitigate and lighten the evils and afflictions of this life. It is no great matter how rough the way be, provided we be ſure that it leads to happineſs. The incomparably greater good of the next life will to a wiſe and conſiderate man weigh down all the evils of this. And the Scripture tells us that there is no compariſon between them. *The ſufferings of this preſent* Rom 8. 18 *time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* The evils of this life afflict men more or leſs, according as the ſoul is fortified with conſiderations proper to ſupport us under them. When we conſider that we have but a little while to be here, that we are upon our journey travelling towards our heavenly Country, where we ſhall meet with all the delights we can deſire; it ought not to trouble us much, to endure ſtorms and foul ways, and to want many of thoſe accommodations we might expect at home. This is the common fate of Travellers, and we muſt take things as we find them, and not look to have every thing juſt

to

to our mind. Theſe difficulties and inconveniences will ſhortly be over, and after a few days will be quite forgotten, and be to us as if they had never been. And when we are ſafely landed in our ovvn Country, vvith vvhat pleaſure ſhall vve look back upon thoſe rough and boiſterous Seas vvhich vve have eſcap'd? The more troubles vve have paſt through, the kinder uſage vve ſhall find vvhen vve come to our Father's houſe. So the Apoſtle tells us, that *our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* When vve come to heaven, our happineſs ſhall then be as real as our miſeries vvere here upon earth, and far greater and more laſting. And vvhat great matter is it, though vve ſuffer a vvhile in this vvorld, provided vve eſcape the endleſs and unſufferable torments of the next; though vve have not our good things in this life, if infinitely greater be reſerved for us, and vve ſhall receive them vvith intereſt in the other?

Several of the evils and calamities of this life vvould be inſufferable indeed, if there vvere nothing better to be hoped for hereafter. If this vvere true, Chriſtians would not only be of all *men*, but of all *creatures*, *the moſt miſerable*. But our Religion

gion hath abundantly aſſur'd us to the contrary. And the aſſurance of this, was that which made the primitive Chriſtians to embrace ſufferings with ſo much cheerfulneſs, *to glory in tribulation*, and *to take joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring ſubſtance.* The ſeven brethren in the Hiſtory of the *Maccabees*, upon this perſwaſion, would *not accept deliverance that they might obtain a better reſurrection.* That ſtorm of ſtones which was pour'd upon St. *Stephen*, was no more to him than a common ſhower, when *he ſaw the heavens open'd*, and *Jeſus* (in whoſe cauſe he ſuffer'd) *ſtanding on the right hand of God.*

4. To make us ſincere in all our profeſſions, words and actions. Did men firmly believe the rewards of another world, their Religion would not be only in ſhew and pretence, but in life and reality; no man would put on a *form of godlineſs*, that were deſtitute of *the power of it*; we ſhould do nothing for the opinion of others, but all with regard to God, and our own Conſciences; and be as curious of our thoughts and moſt retir'd actions, as if we were in an open theater, and in the preſence of the greateſt aſſembly. For in the next life men

men ſhall not be rewarded for what they ſeem'd to be, but for what they really were, in this world. Therefore whatever we think, or ſpeak, or do, we ſhould always remember, that the day of revelation is coming, when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſclos'd, when all diſguiſes ſhall be laid aſide, and every ones maſk ſhall be taken off, and all our actions and deſigns ſhall be brought upon the publick ſtage, and expos'd to the view of men and Angels. *There is nothing* now *hidden which ſhall not* then *be reveal'd, nor ſecret, which ſhall not be made known.*

5. To arm us againſt the fears of death. Death is terrible to nature, and the terrour of it is infinitely encreas'd, by the fearful apprehenſions of what may follow it. But the comfortable hopes of a bleſſed immortality, do ſtrangely relieve the fainting ſpirits of dying men, and are able to reconcile us to death, and in a great meaſure to take away the terrour of it. I know that the thoughts of death are diſmal, even to good men; and we have never more need of comfort and encouragement, than when we are conflicting with this laſt enemy; and there is no ſuch comfortable conſideration to a dying man, as the hopes of a happy eternity. He that

looks

looks upon death only as a paſſage to glory, may welcome the meſſengers of it, as bringing him the beſt and moſt joyful news that ever came to him in his whole life; and no man can ſtay behind in this world, with half the comfort that this man leaves it.

And now I have done with the *two* things imply'd in this phraſe, of *having our converſation in heaven, viz.* the ſerious thoughts and conſideration of heaven, and the effect of theſe thoughts and conſiderations upon our hearts and lives.

I crave your patience but a little longer, till I make ſome reflection upon what hath been deliver'd, concerning the happineſs of good men after this life. I have told you, that it is incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world; that it is great in it ſelf; and eternal in its duration; and far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. And now, after all this, I am very ſenſible, how much all that I have ſaid comes ſhort of the greatneſs and dignity of the thing. So that I could almoſt begin again, and make a new attempt upon this ſubject. And indeed who would not be loth to be taken off from ſo delightful an argument? Methinks 'tis good for us to be here, and to let our minds dwell upon

theſe

theſe conſiderations. We are unworthy of heaven, and unfit to partake of ſo great a Glory, if we cannot take pleaſure in the contemplation of thoſe things now, the poſſeſſion whereof ſhall be our happineſs for ever.

With what joy then ſhould we think of thoſe *great and glorious things, which God hath prepar'd for them that love him; of that inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, which fadeth not away, reſerv'd for us in the heavens*? How ſhould we welcome the thoughts of that happy hour, when we ſhall make our eſcape out of theſe priſons, when we ſhall paſs out *of this howling wilderneſs* into *the promis'd Land*, when we ſhall be remov'd from all the troubles and temptations of a wicked and ill-natur'd VVorld; when we ſhall be paſt all ſtorms, and ſecur'd from all further danger of ſhipwrack, and ſhall be ſafely landed in the regions of bliſs and immortality?

O bleſſed time! *When all tears ſhall be wip'd from our eyes*; and *death and ſorrow ſhall be no more*; When *mortality* ſhall *be ſwallow'd up of life*, and we ſhall enter upon the poſſeſſion of all that happineſs and glory which God hath promis'd, and our faith hath believ'd, and our hopes have

raiſ'd

rais'd us to the expectation of; when we ſhall be eas'd of all our pains, and reſolv'd of all our doubts, and be purg'd from all our ſins, and be free'd from all our fears, and be happy beyond all our hopes, and have all this happineſs ſecur'd to us beyond the power of time and change: When we ſhall know God and other things without ſtudy, and love him, and one another without meaſure, and ſerve and praiſe him without wearineſs, and obey his will without the leaſt reluctancy; and ſhall ſtill be more and more delighted in the knowing, and loving, and praiſing, and obeying of God to all eternity.

How ſhould theſe thoughts affect our hearts; and what a mighty influence ought they to have upon our lives? The great diſadvantage of the arguments fetch'd from another world is this, that thoſe things are at a great diſtance from us, and not ſenſible to us; and therefore are not apt to affect us ſo ſtrongly, and to work ſo powerfully upon us. Now to make amends for this diſadvantage, we ſhould often revive theſe conſiderations upon our minds, and inculcate upon our ſelves the reality and certainty of theſe things, together with the infinite weight and importance of them. We ſhould reaſon thus

with

with our ſelves; If good men ſhall be ſo unſpeakably happy, and conſequently, wicked men ſo extreamly miſerable in another world: If theſe things be true, and will one day be found to be ſo; why ſhould they not be to me as if they were already preſent? why ſhould not I be as much afraid to commit any ſin, as if hell were naked before me, and I ſaw the aſtoniſhing miſeries of the damned? and why ſhould I not be as careful to ſerve God and keep his commandments, as if heaven were open to my view, and I ſaw *Jeſus* ſtanding at the right hand of God, with crowns of glory in his hand, ready to be ſet upon the heads of all thoſe who continue faithful to him?

The lively apprehenſions of the nearneſs of death and eternity, are apt to make mens thoughts more quick and piercing; and according as we think our ſelves prepar'd for our future ſtate to tranſport us with joy, or to amaze us with horrour. For the ſoul that is fully ſatisfi'd of his future bliſs, is already entred into heaven, has begun to take poſſeſſion of glory, and has (as it were) his bleſſed Saviour in his arms, and may ſay with old *Simeon*, *Lord now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation.* But the

the thoughts of death muſt needs be very terrible to that man who is doubtful or deſpairng of his future condition. It would daunt the ſtouteſt man that ever breathed, to look upon death, when he can ſee nothing but hell beyond it. When the Apparition at *Endor* told *Saul*, *to morrow thou and thy ſons ſhall be with me*, theſe words ſtruck him to the heart, ſo that *he fell down to the ground, and there was no more ſtrength left in him.* It is as certain that we ſhall dye, as if an expreſs meſſenger ſhould come to every one of us from the other world, and tell us ſo. Why ſhould we not then always live as thoſe that muſt dye, and as thoſe that hope to be happy after death? To have theſe apprehenſions vigorous and lively upon our minds, this is *to have our converſation in heaven from whence alſo we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things to himſelf.*

FINIS.

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